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**News narratives about migrants ‘at the border’
in Italian and Spanish online news media, 2013-2015**

By

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the representation of African migrants in Italian and Spanish online news media through the lens of the border. By employing an interdisciplinary approach, in which the migrant crossings of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders are a central research focus, this work explores the written and visual representations of migrants from September 2013 to August 2015. Throughout this time frame, which represents a crucial period in the long-lasting story of migration from Africa towards Europe, the analysis of online news items demonstrates that news media representations of migrants depend on the very nature of the borders that migrants attempt to cross while paralleling the institutional standpoints provided by official news sources.

Furthermore, from a cultural perspective, the research here explores the features of online news narratives as well as the role of the working practices of Italian and Spanish journalists in the production of migrant representations. It also discusses the meanings that are embedded in such news narratives. As a result, through an innovative methodological approach, which includes the analysis of online news items and interviews with journalists, this thesis provides a critical framework for the investigation of online news production and contemporary journalism more broadly.

Acknowledgments

§ (99). *La legge del numero* (base psicologica delle manifestazioni pubbliche: processioni, assemblee popolari ecc.). A Roma gli schiavi non potevano essere riconosciuti come tali. Quando un senatore propose una volta che agli schiavi fosse dato un abito che li distinguesse, il Senato fu contrario al provvedimento, per timore che gli schiavi divenissero pericolosi qualora potessero rendersi conto del loro grande numero. Seneca, *De clem.*, I, 24. Cfr Tacito, *Annali*, 4, 27¹.

The law of numbers (psychological base of public manifestations: processions, people meetings, etc.). In Rome, slaves were not recognisable as such. When a senator once proposed that slaves should be given clothes that distinguished them, the Senate opposed the suggestion. It feared that slaves would become dangerous if they were able to recognize their large number.

Gramsci's note in Miscellany. Gramsci, A. (1975) *Quaderni dal Carcere (vol.I)*, Giulio Einaudi Editore, Torino, pp377.

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Born as a form of protest against the media representation of migration, this research has grown as an attempt to understand the hows and whys of contemporary news communication.

Thank you for reading my work.

Francesca

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1.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore online news narratives about the migrant crossings of two distinct borders: first, the maritime border between Libya and Italy, the Mediterranean Sea, and secondly, the terrestrial and maritime borders between Morocco and Spain, which are, respectively, the border fences in the Spanish cities of Melilla and Ceuta on northern Africa and the Strait of Gibraltar. Therefore, the research will compare two case studies, Italy and Spain, and, for each of them, it will consider the news content of two online versions of traditional daily newspapers and two digital-born news media.

Within this construction, the journalistic practices and routines in both the Italian and Spanish contexts will emerge as crucial to the representation of immigration across the two borders. Despite their sympathetic attitude about migrants, in fact, journalists tend not to mediate their portrayal by official news sources and news agencies, thus conveying written and visual descriptions of migrant border crossings that are rooted in political viewpoints and discourse.

The analytical framework of the current work, which is interdisciplinary in essence, will be defined by a cultural approach to journalism and online news production (Zelizer 2005; Hanitzsch 2011) whilst employing the geopolitical concept of border as a space where societal and political meanings are negotiated (Walters 2002; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Casas-Cortés et al. 2015). Within this theoretical context, the study will investigate how Italian and Spanish online news media have represented migrants in the act of crossing

borders and will discuss the news narratives that have been disseminated from September 2013 to August 2015.

Indeed, immigration is a central issue in the news nowadays. In the last few years, in particular since the shipwreck that occurred near the Italian island of Lampedusa on the 3rd October 2013, when more than 360 migrants drowned, news coverage about migrant border crossings has been constant in Italian as well as Spanish news media. In 2014, 3,500 migrants died in the Mediterranean, between Libya and Italy (UNHCR 2015). This number increased considerably in the following years, up to about 3,770 in 2015 and 5,000 in 2016, which has been 'the worst annual death toll ever seen' (UNHCR 2016a; 2016b). These figures, nonetheless, do not include shipwrecks of migrant boats, which certainly occurred in the Mediterranean without being reported (UNHCR 2016a; 2016b).

On the other hand, in Morocco, more than 20,000 migrants repeatedly tried to climb the border fences separating the country from the Spanish autonomous cities of Melilla and Ceuta in 2014, and about 4,000 of them were eventually successful (Human Rights Watch 2015). In 2015, such attempts intensified; then they decreased in 2016. In those years the irregular entries over the fences did not reach the number that was recorded in 2014, but the Spanish government, nevertheless, began to reinforce border security measures and elevate the number of guards at the Morocco-Spain border (Amnesty International 2015).

When the current study was just at an initial phase, the year 2014 was defined in the widespread political debate as the worst year ever for immigration

from Africa. Since then, numbers of migrants 'at the border' have increased and the migration phenomenon has expanded, involving other countries and borders. This has led to a continuous reproduction of news articles about similar issues, which may even be seen as an ever-present story. Particularly in Italy and Spain, which are two of Europe's border countries, such news coverage has never stopped during the time frame considered in this work.

Hence, this study has crystallised around the idea of analysing the news about migrant border crossings as a single and long-lasting narrative – an idea that has been elaborated across the entire process of theoretical development of this research. This narrative, in fact, articulates and connects one migration-related event to another across time: rescue operations, migrant deaths, and national and supranational political responses and actions. The main hypothesis of this research has been that, through its repetition, this long-lasting news narrative has produced specific news media attitudes toward migration-telling as well as new cultural meanings about migration and borders more broadly.

Indeed, this study embraces the idea that journalistic communication acts as an expression of the dominant culture; news, therefore, is a product that reflects and reinforces such cultural and societal values (Hall et al., 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Carey, 1989; Thompson, 1990; Schudson 1995). The news shapes and disseminates social knowledge – a 'common sense' that depends on the way in which reality is articulated within society – which is strengthened by narrative conventions as well as taken-for-granted assumptions.

In the case of Italy and Spain, which share common features within their traditional media systems such as the influence of news sources like political

actors and a high level of commercialisation of processes of news production, the dissemination of similar news narratives about migration from Africa has followed corresponding patterns from the early 1990s. Likewise, as will be shown in the next chapter, the news has highlighted transformations of both social processes and news narratives across time within both national contexts.

From this perspective, the research here will analyse news narratives about migrant border crossings in two countries, Italy and Spain, which despite having a spatial and cultural proximity are nevertheless characterised by two different geographical contexts. The two distinct borders that characterise them, the Mediterranean Sea and the border fences in Melilla and Ceuta, will be investigated as the factors that may have differentially influenced and shaped news representations of migrants and their movements towards Europe.

Furthermore, by contrasting the news narratives of the online versions of traditional newspapers with the corresponding contents that have been produced by digital-born news media, the current study will attempt to establish whether or not these two types of online news media have produced original news narratives, within the traditions of these news organisations' stances and values. As will be discussed further, the hypothesis suggested here is in fact that the rise of independent digital-born news media within the Italian and Spanish news media systems, starting from 2010, may have challenged the dominant representation of migrants proposed by traditional news media. In sum, the main research questions of this study are:

- How are migrants 'at the border' represented in the news (RQ1a) and how are they portrayed in news pictures and videos (RQ1b)?
- What are the news narratives about migrant border crossings (RQ2a) and how have they changed from September 2013 to August 2015 (RQ2b)?
- What are the differences between Italian and Spanish online news media in migration-telling (RQ3a)? And what are the differences between traditional and digital-born news media's narratives (RQ3b)?

In the next chapter, to reinforce these research questions, the literature review will be distributed around three main areas of research interest: media systems and role perception of journalists in Italy and Spain; news as a cultural product and journalistic practices and routines in online news environments; and, finally, borders as a complementary analytical framework and news media's representation of migrants.

The first part of the next chapter will introduce Italy and Spain as case studies and will discuss their respective media systems from the 1970s up to the rise of digital news media in the 2000s. Furthermore, the role perceptions of journalists will be considered in this work as an integral part of both Italian and Spanish news media systems. In addition, the use and influence of specific news sources and professional practices entailing, for instance, the idea of 'objectivity' will be identified as contradicting personal stances of journalists about the news coverage of migration-related issues.

In the second part of the chapter, the literature will reflect on the news as

a culturally determined product and will discuss news sourcing and routines as the professional practices that directly affect the production of news narratives. Furthermore, the section will explore how the Internet has changed journalists' daily work and how visuals have challenged online news telling.

In the third part of the Literature Review chapter, the concept of border as a theoretical tool for the analysis of news narratives about migrant border crossings will be considered. One of the aims of this section will be to shed light on the role that the European Union has played in the context of migration from Africa towards Italy and Spain, which share the supranational jurisdiction of their southern borders. In addition, the political construction of the 'illegality' of migrants as well as the news representation of immigration more broadly will be discussed.

From this perspective, the next chapter will describe the relationship between the migrant crossings of the Italian and Spanish borders and the actions performed there by national and supranational institutional actors. The focus of the analysis that this study will further present is in fact the correlation between the migrants' attempt to cross the borders and the political reaction to them, which produce the distinct representations of the migrants 'at the border'.

Indeed, through the analysis of the news narratives about migrant border crossings, the study here intends to identify the features of this specific representation of migrants in order to discuss the meanings that this news portrayal implies. Such an analysis also intends to identify what journalistic practices actually lead to the production of this news representation in order to shed light on the contemporary enactment of journalism in the online

environment. As a result, the emphasis on both news narratives about migrant border crossings and online news production will express a timely critique of the news media representation of migration from Africa towards Europe and will represent an attempt to draw attention to what the portrayal of migrants 'at the border' *means* at a cultural level.

1.1 *Original features and limitations of the work*

The analysis that will be proposed in this work is informed by the debate about the historical and political frameworks of the representation of immigration in Italian and Spanish news media, which will be presented in the Literature Review. References to current national and European political contexts will constitute an integral part of the discussion as well. In this regard, the political viewpoints springing from news sources such as institutional and non-governmental statements and press releases will therefore emerge as crucial in the current news representation of migrant border crossings on both Italian and Spanish online news media.

As will be explained further in the *Methodology*, the eight news media websites considered in this study were selected among mainstream news media organisations and their political stance was not a parameter of selection. Therefore, political viewpoints and perspectives in news narratives will certainly be an integral element of the analysis of news items but without constituting a privileged viewpoint on the news representation of migrant border crossings. In this work, in fact, the substance of the critique is the discussion of the

journalistic practices that shape the news representation of migrants 'at the border' rather than the political attitudes that may emerge from the distinct news media selected. The practice of journalism will indeed be at the core of the analysis of news narratives, since its performance is what ultimately shapes the very news production.

In other words, the main foci of the current work can be summarised in three key points, each of them expressing a specific area of academic contribution. To begin with, this study looks at online news as a conduit of information whose structural complexity seems not to have yet received any particular attention in the field of journalism studies. How online news narratives could be analysed from a cultural perspective in order to generate consistent findings, therefore, has been a major issue in this work. As a result, an experimental methodological approach has been designed and this will be discussed in-depth in the chapter, '*Methodology: a three-layer analysis for online news*', from both a theoretical and practical perspective.

Furthermore, online news narratives are explored here in terms of a comprehensive journalistic product. As highlighted at the beginning of the Literature Review, how journalism as culture has responded to the introduction of the technological tools offered by the Internet in the processes of news production has become a theme of interest in media research only recently (Dickinson et al. 2013; Carlson 2016). Therefore, in addition to the analysis of news items about migrant border crossings, interviews with journalists have been included as a supplementary method of investigation in order to discuss the professional practices and routines that shape such news products. By

providing the analysis of news contents, as well as information about how Italian and Spanish journalists have produced them, this study will shed light on the multiple processes affecting the news representation of migrants and migration more broadly. These aspects of the research will be at the core of the chapter, '*Journalistic performance and news production: challenges and contradictions*'.

Finally, by looking at news narratives about migrant border crossings from a comparative perspective, the current work will explore the cultural meanings that the news disseminates in Italy and Spain. Not only two countries, but also the news items and the processes of news production of two different types of online news media will be compared. As a consequence, the analysis of news narratives as well as the processes of their production in the online versions of traditional daily newspapers and digital-born news media in Italy and Spain will expand the focus of this study on the news representation of migrants into the field of the practice of journalism within two different cultural contexts.

In sum, these three main points represent the originality of the current study. In Methodology, an innovative analytical approach to the investigation of online news items will be presented as the fabric of the analysis that has been conducted on news narratives about migrant border crossings. Through a set of theoretical methods and practical tools from the field of semiotic and discourse analysis, the methodology will demonstrate how it is possible to bridge research gaps concerning the relationship between news content and the processes of its production (Weaver 2015) and will show the influence that specific contemporary working routines have on news content (Dickinson et al. 2013; Carlson 2016).

Within this framework, the representation of migrants in online news narratives will act as a case study. This will be analysed according to four main themes of interests, each of them referring to the four main protagonists of the news about migrant border crossings: migrants and the Italian, Spanish, and the European Union institutional actors. As will be explained in the Methodology, the dynamics concerning the actions performed at the border by these actors will be the focus of the search for cultural meanings in the news items selected here. Research findings, which will be explored across the three parts of the Data Analysis and in the two following discussion chapters, will ultimately constitute a comprehensive and comparative study of news narratives in two distinct cultural and geographical contexts such as Italy and Spain.

As a demonstration of the complexity of the analysis, which will include linguistic features from discourse analysis, this study of news narratives will examine news pictures as well, in accord with Barthes' (1977) semiotic perspective. In Barthes' (1977) view, news photographs, as analogical, 'objective' reproductions of reality, lack a code, that is to say symbolic and rhetorical elements (p17) and are connoted by the use that is made of them within newsrooms. For instance, the meanings that pictures convey can be shaped by the layout in which they are placed within newspaper pages and by the written texts that surround them. In this study, therefore, the visual analysis will look at the relationship between news pictures and texts as that directing the interpretation of narratives (Barthes 1977; Bateman 2014).

Accordingly, the interpretation of news photographs will avoid engaging with an iconographic analysis of their content (van Leeuwen 2001), which

would require a focus on their potential symbolism, and the interpretation of pictures' composition (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), which tend to suggest 'motivations' and identify meanings for any aspect of the image, whether it is its perspective or frame. Although both approaches draw on Barthes' work in semiotics, in fact, they seem to move away from Barthes' (1977) original thought. In it, a photographic image is “a message without a code”, a “continuous message” (p16), which is connoted by the context in which it lies and that cannot actually be explained through codes.

This is certainly suitable for news pictures as they attempt to reproduce reality with all the limitations that reality itself implies. For instance, the physical distance between photographers and the events that they document determines the features of the images that they produce, and this is certainly the case in the news pictures portraying migrant border crossings in the Mediterranean as well as at the Morocco-Spain border.

It may be said, however, that the way in which news pictures are interpreted here is one of the limits of the current study. By looking at the relationship between written and visual texts, in fact, the analysis will not consider photojournalists' perspectives just as it will not engage with those of their employers, who selected certain pictures and not others. If such approaches were employed, it would certainly be possible to identify interesting sets of meanings in news narratives. However, their development would require the design of different research frameworks. In a similar fashion, as already pointed out, the current study will not acknowledge the role that news media organisations' political stance plays on the representation of migration-related

issues.

In the end, news narratives will be explored here only in terms of a cultural production, since this work intends to shed light on the complexity of ideas and practices that journalistic communication about movements of people across borders entails. It will also describe the working processes continuously reproducing certain meanings over time – processes in which journalists seem to be caught. The result will broaden the scope here of an exploration of the representation of migrants and migrant border crossings in Italian and Spanish online news media to the benefit of a wider reflection on contemporary journalism.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Journalism as culture: Italy and Spain as case studies

This first section of the chapter intends to present the two case studies, Italy and Spain, which will be considered for the analysis of news narratives about migrant border crossings. In particular, the literature review here will discuss the media systems and role perceptions of journalists in the two countries. It will also prepare the ground for the exploration of subjects such as online news production and representation of migrants in Italian and Spanish news media, which will be introduced in the two following sections of this chapter.

The current study aims to investigate news narratives and cultural meanings in online news, as well as the relationship between news content and the working practices of Italian and Spanish journalists. As will soon become clear, the theoretical perspective that will be presented across the entire chapter is intended to position journalism within a cultural framework. Journalism, in fact, is shaped by the ideas and practices that journalists articulate, in diverse working settings and national contexts, and the common knowledge that they share as members of a distinctive professional group (Zelizer 2005; Preston 2009; Hanitzsch 2011; Carlson 2016). As a distinct cultural practice, journalism cannot be defined once and for all (Zelizer 2005). Nevertheless, it can be observed through the changes in journalists' practices, which mirror as much as create journalistic culture. In Hanitzsch's (2007) own words:

“Journalism culture becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act; it can be defined as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful for themselves and others” (p369).

From this perspective, journalism suffers from the internal contradictions between how journalists interpret their professional role and how they actually perform their work. The introduction of technological features of the Internet such as hyperlinks, for instance, has produced different ways of enacting traditional journalistic practices such as news sourcing (Deuze 2003; Beckett and Mansell 2008; Lewis et al. 2014; Villegas and Álvarez 2016). As a result, in the field of journalism studies a need has recently developed for theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches which can assess the changes that technological advances have brought into journalism culture as well as journalistic communication (Steensen and Ahva 2016; Reese 2016).

According to Reese (2016), for instance, Internet connectivity supplies journalists with a constant flow of information and this has recently shifted research interests from the ideologies and structures of news media outlets to the actual working practices and routines of individual journalists. As Carlson (2016) has remarked, journalists are in fact currently shaping journalistic culture within a new working scenario, the online environment, in which they find themselves constantly negotiating the traditional values and practices that ultimately legitimise their work as well as their profession. Indeed, according to Carlson (2016), journalism is “a form of knowledge production”, which is “always

provisional" (p351).

Similarly, the responses of journalists to the challenges that the introduction of the technological features of the Internet have posed to journalism as a culture have become central to the investigation of news production (Dickinson et al. 2013; Carlson 2016). On the one hand, journalists are re-legitimising their role in online working environments; on the other hand, they are losing control over the very meaning-making process of the news (Carlson 2016). As Dickinson et al. (2013) have suggested, therefore, the study of journalism should focus on journalists' attitudes to technology, with the twofold aim of highlighting cultural values and social processes in the practice of journalism as well as the influences and limits of journalistic work in a globalised news media market.

From this perspective, the relationship between journalistic routines and the news content that journalists produce is still a highly under-researched area of study (Weaver 2015). Likewise, not enough attention has been paid to the personal experiences of journalists as they have adapted to new working environments such as those that emerged after the introduction of the Internet (Dickinson et al. 2013).

Without presuming to bridge the gaps highlighted here, the current study will nevertheless attempt to demonstrate how the specific contemporary working routines of Italian and Spanish journalists have contributed to the production of specific representations of migrants and news narratives about migrant border crossings in eight online news media between 2013 and 2015. In order to build a context for the analysis of such news narratives in Italy and Spain, the next

section will review the development of the news media systems and the role perceptions of journalists in both countries. The rise of digital-born news media as well as recent changes in the role of journalists in online working environments will also be considered in a final section.

2.1.1 Media systems and role perception of journalists in Italy and Spain

The Italian and Spanish media systems are equally representative of the Mediterranean, or Polarized Pluralist Model, that has been delineated by Hallin and Mancini (2004), in which Portugal, Greece, and France are included. According to these authors, the main features of this model of media system are: a strong involvement of state and political parties in the media industry (also Ciaglia 2013; Humanes Humanes et al. 2013; Cornia et al. 2016; Briziarelli 2017); clientelism as a common practice within the media sector (also Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002; Hibberd 2007; Humanes Humanes et al. 2013); and a low level of professionalism among journalists (also Spalletta and Ugolini 2011; Gómez-Mompart et al. 2015). Alongside these main features, Hallin and Mancini (2004) have then acknowledged that the analysis they propose should integrate the historical, socio-political, and cultural characteristics of the countries considered, in order to avoid generalisations.

Indeed, as will be shown in this section, the media systems in Italy and Spain began to diverge substantially in the late 1970s, due to the political developments that conditioned societal transformations in both countries. It is worth observing, however, that specific cultural and historical contexts made

Italy and Spain two quite distinct media environments even earlier than the 1970s.

Take the low circulation of newspapers up to the end of World War II in both countries, for instance. Hallin and Mancini (2004) have ascribed that chiefly to high illiteracy rates in the Italian and Spanish populations. However, from a national perspective, the newspapers' low circulation rates might have been explained differently. Gramsci (1977, p343), for instance, reported that in Italy the press emerged in the late nineteenth century as a specific political instrument of information. Newspapers, therefore, were essentially sold to individuals who had strong political interests and this had certainly limited newspaper circulation across the country (Gramsci 1977, p343).

It should be considered, moreover, that Italy and Spain were, and still are, multilingual countries with strong regional identities, which have had a crucial influence over the press. Beyond several dialects, in Italy there are 14 minority languages and the stabilisation of Italian as a national language originated from the wide spread of television as recently as the late 1950s (de Mauro 2005). In Spain, on the other hand, there are four co-official languages, corresponding to four culturally diverse regions, and several local dialects.

To strengthen the idea that sales alone do not provide much information about the reasons for the low circulation rates of newspapers, it is also worth noting that in Italy and Spain there is a custom of reading newspapers for free in cafés. Most bars, in fact, make at least one of the numerous national and regional daily newspapers available to their customers. In the case of Italy, it may even be said that the cultural habit of reading newspapers in public places

parallels the practice of watching television at the bar, which, in the late 1950s, encouraged about 12 out of 18 million television viewers to spend hours in cafés (Lezzi 1958).

In the next sections, the historical and societal characteristics that differentiate the media systems in Italy and Spain will be considered from the late 1970s, when two main events occurred in the two countries. In Italy, the turning point of the media system's development was represented by the entry of the construction investor Silvio Berlusconi into the media arena after the national public broadcasting company RAI-TV, *Radiotelevisione Italiana*, lost the monopoly control of the sector in 1976 (Mazzoleni 1991). In Spain, on the other hand, after the end of the dictatorship in 1975, crucial to the future development of the media system was the introduction of the Constitution in 1978, where freedom of expression was legally ratified (Zugasti 2012).

Within these historical frameworks, the next two sections, which will cover the cases of Italy and Spain separately, will also offer an overview of studies about the role perceptions of journalists in the two countries. The news media and journalists, in fact, are bound together by the ethical principles and professional norms of journalism (Eide and Siøvaag 2016). Reflecting on how journalists cope with contradictions between practice and ideals within their profession, therefore, will shed light on the nuances of journalism as culture and news as a cultural product.

To sum up, the development and transformation of the Italian and Spanish media systems from the late 1970s will be presented in the next two sections. In addition, the review of the literature about the changes that the rise

of digital-born news media has brought into the news media sectors in Italy and Spain and the new roles of journalists within them will be discussed.

2.1.2 *The Italian case*

In Italy, the state lost control of the broadcasting company RAI-TV in 1976, when the constitutional court declared RAI's monopoly to be illegitimate. Hereafter, newspaper publishers, private entrepreneurs, political groups, and foreign television companies began competing against each other in order to guarantee themselves a spot within the Italian broadcasting sector (Bechelloni 1980), which remained deregulated until 1990 (Mazzoleni 1991). At that time, Silvio Berlusconi had the opportunity to acquire three television channels, *Rete4*, *Italia1*, and *Canale5*, and to enter the administration of a daily newspaper, *Il Giornale*, as a major shareholder.

In addition, other Italian businessmen invested in the media sector in those years. For instance, FIAT's major owner, Gianni Agnelli, entered the capital stock of two daily newspapers, *La Stampa* and *Il Corriere della Sera*, and the industrialist Carlo De Benedetti took control of a media conglomerate, *Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso*, which nowadays publishes one of the best-selling Italian daily newspapers, *La Repubblica* (Mazzoleni 1991; Farinelli et al. 1997).

Since the 1980s, the Italian broadcasting industry has been dominated by two major television networks: the public service broadcaster, RAI, and Berlusconi's commercial network, Mediaset, each of them operating on three

national channels. Berlusconi's media power, in fact, increased rapidly in those years and in the late 1980s Mediaset already shared with RAI more than 85 per cent of the national audience (Padovani 2015).

In the 2000s, two main facts characterised the development of the media sector. On the one hand, commercial broadcasting started dominating the Italian media system. On the other, the press began to gradually introduce changes in daily and periodical publications due to a significant decrease in sales. As a result, some newspapers shifted to smaller Berliner-style sizes whilst others began to include supplements such as encyclopaedias, novels and populist stories to attract new readers (Fortunati and Sarrica 2005; Hibberd 2008a). In particular, in 2002, such commercial activity generated a sale of more than 44 million books. Furthermore, the decade witnessed the launch of free newspapers for distribution in public places, whose short articles, mostly covering soft news, were their main editorial characteristic (Hibberd 2008b).

In the late 2000s, the RAI-Mediaset duopoly represented the main source of information for 94 per cent of the population, although a variety of small regional and local channels continued to exist (Durante and Knight 2009). Many of them, nevertheless, came to an end in 2009, due to a reduction in the number of analogue-frequencies that the introduction of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) had caused in most regions that year (Hibberd 2007; Padovani 2015).

Such a process of transformation in the broadcasting sector affected the bottom-up movement known as 'street-television', which had emerged in the early 2000s. In similar fashion to the anarchist radio channels that in the 1960s

and 1970s were born as forms of popular political criticism (Downing 2001; Ardizzoni 2013), the 'street-television' movement actively promoted freedom of expression and resistance towards traditional media and political powers. The mainstream news media sector, in fact, was highly politicised, a 'monoculture', and some tele-street projects attempted to make micro-television channels flourish by producing TV programmes with cheap technologies (Ardizzoni 2013).

The Italian street-television movement has been documented by Ardizzoni (2013) through the example of a street-tv project, *Insu^tv*, which was funded in Naples from 2003. Although there are no official figures, the founders reported that about 500,000 locals used to watch *Insu^tv* (Ardizzoni 2013, p874). Furthermore, in Naples, where the population largely consists of migrants, *Insu^tv* offered a documentary-style production including the *Tg Migranti* newscast, a broadcast service in which migrants reported the news in their native languages – Italian subtitles were then added in post-production. Since collaborators and activists of *Insu^tv* used to author their works behind a collective anonymous identity, Ardizzoni (2013) has pointed out that such an anonymity was “a pungent critique of a political climate of power accumulation and a narrative of media monopoly as 'authored' by one omnipotent political and media mogul” (p877); that is to say, Silvio Berlusconi.

Indeed, the conflict of political and commercial interests that Berlusconi, as Prime Minister and media tycoon, has epitomised from 1994 to 2011 has turned the Italian media system into an exceptional case (Mancini 2013; Padovani 2015; Briziarelli 2017). Nevertheless, in such a context, Italian

journalists, who have traditionally played the role of political figures by taking sides in the public debate, have demonstrated that political activism is an integral part of the Italian journalistic culture (Vaccari 2011; Mancini 2013; Cornia et al. 2016). As Mancini (2013) has observed:

“Most Italian journalists have a clear political affiliation that not rarely overlaps with the more general affiliation of the news outlet itself. The shift from professional journalism towards direct political involvement and vice versa is (and has always been) quite normal in Italian journalism” (p341).

Beyond an overall lack of balance between hard-facts and opinions, Italian news reporting is characterised by a particular attention to policy-making strategies within the political scenario rather than the investigation of the 'substance' of policies and state intervention in social and economic matters (Esser and Umbricht 2014). Nevertheless, politicians comprise the main sources of information for journalists (Cornia et al. 2016). The elements belonging to such an interpretative journalistic style have been concisely outlined by Esser and Umbricht (2014), as follows:

“A hard-facts-first structure, separation of facts and opinion, the use of expert sources, and consideration of both sides remained rather extraneous elements in the reporting of Italian newspapers of the 1960s and the 2000s. On the other hand, political sources are quoted extensively, which could be interpreted as indicating a persistently strong press-party parallelism” (p244).

Within the Italian media system, the tight relationship between politics and the media was particularly visible during the years of political activity of Silvio Berlusconi, which was in conflict with his varying editorial ownerships. Nevertheless, the compliance of journalists with the government's stance was unmasked by those occasions in which freedom of expression was severely limited (Hibberd 2007; González Cortés 2011; Padovani 2015). In 2002, for instance, Berlusconi made RAI remove from its own national channels two senior journalists and one comedian-satirist who had expressed their doubts about both the political and commercial activities of the then Prime Minister. Their use of public television was considered by Berlusconi as overtly critical and, therefore, 'criminal'. This controversy, which broke out during an official visit of the Prime Minister to Bulgaria, is known as *Editto Bulgaro*, 'the Bulgarian Edict' (Padovani 2015), and it has been reported by Hibberd (2007) as the 'Sofia Declaration'.

Overall, journalists tend to consider themselves "as more liberal than the news organisations for which they work" (Patterson and Donsbach 1996, p458) and, from this perspective, their individual attitudes and viewpoints influence news production and decision making processes, even unwittingly (Donsbach and Klett 1993; Patterson and Donsbach 1996; Cornia et al. 2016). Within such a framework, journalistic values such as objectivity are the touchstone of journalists' perception of their role within society.

According to Donsbach and Klett (1993), journalists' understanding of a norm such as objectivity is personal and it changes across countries and cultures, generations and political standpoints of journalists (see also Weaver

and Wu 1998). Similarly, Krzyżanowski (2014) and Pihl-Thingvad (2015) have highlighted that what journalists perceive as their professional role and social function cannot be limited to the stance of the news media organisations which they work for. Journalists, in fact, tend to legitimate their work through the ethical principles and ideals that they share as members of the same professional culture; that is, journalism (also García-Avilés 2014).

In the case of Italian journalists, for instance, practices such as avoiding subjectivity and representing the different sides of a political debate in news articles are seen as a proof of 'objective' reporting (Donsbach and Klett 1993). Nevertheless, Patterson and Donsbach (1996) have observed that such attitudes may imply a certain 'hidden bias', which may be difficult to identify as it depends on the individual political stance of journalists. In Patterson's and Donsbach's (1996) own words:

“...journalists typically deny the existence of this bias, claiming that their decisions are premised solely on professional norms. There is, as a consequence, a perceptual gap between journalists' self-image and their actions, and it leads them to reject any suggestion that they are politically biased. Complaints from politicians are dismissed as self-serving and are sometimes portrayed as attacks on the press' freedom and a threat to its objectivity” (p466).

As a result, the fact that journalistic performances entail individual journalists' assumptions and even unconscious beliefs makes it virtually impossible to produce a definitive role perception of journalists once and for all. From this perspective, Tandoc et al. (2013) have also highlighted that studies in the journalism field have not demonstrated a clear relationship between

journalists' interpretation of their role and function within society and their enactment of such a role when reporting the news.

In sum, although the study of journalists' role perceptions was a fertile ground for a thorough approach to journalism culture, the contradictions between journalistic practices and ideals in different working and cultural contexts have not been investigated adequately to substantiate it (Meyen and Riesmeyer 2012). In addition, it has to be acknowledged here that academic research specifically dealing with the role perceptions of Italian journalists is scarce, although studies about the role perceptions of journalists worldwide is largely available (among others, Himmelboim and Limor 2011; Hanitzsch 2011; Meyen and Riesmeyer 2012; Pihl-Thingvad 2015). Nevertheless, a few recent works emphasising the role perception of Italian journalists in the online environment are currently available and will be discussed in the final section of this first part of the chapter, where the rise of digital-born news media in both Italy and Spain will be compared.

2.1.3 *The Spanish case*

In Spain, the development of the current media system began with Franco's death in 1975. The period of time that followed, up to the national referendum that ratified the new Constitution in 1978, is known as *Transición*, the transition from dictatorship to democracy. During that delicate political time, the influence over the public by the press was crucial (Zugasti 2012, p209).

To begin with, newspapers began to assert some resistance to the

dictatorship in the late 1960s and as an account of these efforts they were called 'the Parliament of Paper', *Parlamento de Papel* (Fuentes 1997), "in contrast with the real and non-democratic parliament" (Zugasti 2012, p208). During the *Transición*, then, the press assumed the role of mediator, between a political arena still in construction and the public, whilst actively supporting political change.

Furthermore, in those years, the regional autonomies that had seen their independence taken away from the emergence of Franco's political power in the 1930s attempted to reaffirm their identities. As an illustration, the bilingual press flourished once more across the country thanks to the restoration of regional minority languages, whose public use was prohibited during the dictatorship (Lewis 2008). Nevertheless, local radio and television remained the most trusted means of information for most of the population (Arrese et al. 2009).

At that time, the media market was also challenged by the rise of commercial interests as well as the new normative development of the media system, where the presence of a few privately-run media organisations increased. Their most important representative was certainly the media conglomerate PRISA (*Promotora de Informaciones, Sociedad Anónima*), which launched the daily newspaper *El País* in 1976. Significantly, its administration remained close to the socialist president Felipe González for his entire mandate, from 1982 to 1996 (Arrese et al. 2009).

Overall, however, Spain retained firm control over the national broadcasting sector until the country entered the European Economic Community in 1986. After that, the media sector was opened to private

communication groups and foreign investors (Llorens 2010) and licences to new commercial television channels were granted in 1989. Nevertheless, Spain, which at that time was monitoring the development of the broadcasting industry in Italy, had no intention of replicating the Italian situation and seeing the Spanish media sector monopolised by a media mogul. It therefore limited the distribution of television broadcasting licences to no more than one for a single owner (Llorens 2010).

In 1989, the Spanish media system witnessed the launch of the daily newspaper *El Mundo*. It was funded with the aim of denouncing the corruption in which the socialist government, PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*), seemed to be involved. Moreover, its adversarial journalistic style represented “a phenomenon quite new in a market where the necessary defence of the democratic system had maintained a low profile of political criticism” for more than a decade (Arrese et al. 2009, p22).

However, it is worth mentioning here that, according to Canel and Piqué (1998), in the 1990s, Spanish journalists did not feel they were limited in their work by the media organisations for which they worked. They were, in fact, “the main decision makers in defining what (was) news” (Canel and Piqué 1998, p313) and media publishers claimed to rely on their professionalism.

Although nowadays in Spain there are about 140 newspapers, of which the two best-selling titles are *El País* and *El Mundo*, the press has been heavily affected by an uninterrupted phase of decreasing revenues since the late 1990s (Arrese et al. 2009). According to Humanes Humanes et al. (2013), during this time audiences began to reduce their purchase of newspapers and distance

themselves from mainstream information as a form of criticism of journalists, who were seen as politically aligned and thus more inclined to support political affiliations rather than seriously investigating political matters. Indeed, journalistic values such as 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' have "never consolidated" in Spain (Humanes Humanes et al. 2013, p719; also Martin and Gonzalez 1997).

In this regard, Oller Alonso (2015) has revealed that about 90 per cent of the Spanish journalists he surveyed do not believe in 'absolute objectivity'. For these journalists, "the most used methods to achieve objectivity", which they intend as a separation of facts from opinions, "are 'contrasting opinions and information' and 'approaching different views and perspectives'" (Oller Alonso 2015, p109) in news reporting.

Nevertheless, the case of Spain has shown that there are substantial differences between the professional enactment of new generations of journalists, who nowadays often have a university degree in journalism or communication (Rodríguez et al. 2011; Oller Alonso 2015), and the old guard of journalists, who started practising at the time of the *Transición* (Canel and Piqué 1998; Oller Alonso 2015). Oller Alonso (2015), in fact, has reported that the latter journalists act as 'interpreters' of hard-facts, while the formers think themselves as the professionals who are "responsible for informing the public based on events" (p112). Despite still maintaining such a position, they have recently taken on an interventionist role in order to contrast a political power that is considered largely corrupted (Oller Alonso 2015).

As Hallin and Mancini (2004) have observed, the strong and long-lasting

political parallelism that characterises the Spanish media system has been reflected in the role that journalists play in Spain. In particular, according to Roses and Farias Batlle (2013), Spanish journalists have acted as 'political actors' and 'mobilizers' since Franco's death, with the twofold aim of informing citizens and influencing the political agenda. However, and in contrast with Oller Alonso's (2015) conclusion, Humanes Humanes et al. (2013) have advised that such political activism by journalists should not be interpreted as an expression of an adversarial role, since it is not intended to take the citizenry's side. Rather, it would simply confirm the political orientations of individual journalists.

In support of such a view, a comparative study conducted in 18 Western and Eastern countries (Hanitzsch 2011) has demonstrated that, particularly in Spain, the role of the 'detached watchdog' is not common among journalists. Due to the historical background of the country, in fact, the 'populist disseminator' role would prevail (see also Canel and Piqué 1998). However, it has also been observed (van Dalen et al. 2012) that, after the dictatorship, "Spanish journalists felt it was their task to support the new democratic regime" (p916), assist citizens in the political transition to democracy and also to help them familiarise themselves with new norms and civic values.

Since then, journalists have adopted a 'sacerdotal-partisan role', which at the beginning implied that journalists treated politicians as well as the new political institutions "with respect", as "newsworthy by definition" (van Dalen et al. 2012, p907). Nevertheless, van Dalen et al. (2012) have pointed out that, nowadays, the partisan aspect of the journalist's role does not emerge from the news content relating to the political parties with which news media outlets may

be aligned. Rather than being supportive of those parties, in fact, news coverage of political matters seems to be quite neutral.

In recent years, changing market conditions have had a widespread effect on the press, even on titles like *El País* and *El Mundo*, which began to depend financially on external media organisations and financial institutions. In 2007, for instance, the Italian RCS media group (*Rizzoli-Corriere della Sera Media Group*), which in Italy published leading magazines and newspapers such as *Il Corriere della Sera*, took control of *El Mundo* in order to prevent its possible financial bankruptcy (Bonafont and Baumgartner 2007). Then, in October 2012, *El País* was downsized and almost one out of three of its workers was fired. As the newspaper's editor-in-chief and PRISA administration publicly admitted: "for the first time in its history, the newspaper was losing money" (Luengo 2014, p582).

To sum up, since the 2000s, labour insecurity in the press market has been common to both Italy and Spain. The main reasons for that are: a dramatic decrease in advertising revenues as a result of an increasing economic crisis in both countries; a fall in sales of newspapers and magazines; and the introduction of new technologies in the media market. At the same time, Italy as well as Spain experienced the rise of a renovated collective civic commitment, which found expression also in the online environment. The next section, therefore, will present the socio-cultural contexts in which independent online news media have recently accessed the national media systems in Italy and Spain, sometimes after an initial phase of political activism on the streets.

2.1.4 *The rise of digital-born news media*

Several studies discussing alternative media (Rodriguez 2001; Downing 2001; 2011; Couldry 2003; Couldry and Curran 2003; Atton 2004; Forde 2011; Harcup 2013) have agreed on the features that usually characterise this type of organisation, such as a high potential for democratic participation, which is nevertheless affected by scarce economic resources, and a geographically limited activity. Although these online media are potentially part of a global market, the social interests that lead to their foundation are usually locally-driven, as well as the possible outcome of their online activism.

In the case of Italy and Spain, however, the emergence of independent news media platforms has shown a twofold aim in both countries: first, dissent and resistance towards the traditional media system and, secondly, commitment to a professional recognition within the national media sector. From this perspective, the attitudes of online media entrepreneurs tend to reflect the 'mission' that journalists have to serve the public, as highlighted by Nee (2013), and explain the presence of a more varied coverage of social issues in digital-born news media rather than in the traditional ones, as pointed out by Humprecht and Buchel (2013).

This section will outline the contexts in which Italian and Spanish digital-born news media have been launched in the last decade. It will also discuss how the role perceptions of journalists have been recently challenged by the processes of news production in the online environment. Since academic literature on Italian and Spanish online news media is scarce in English –

especially in the case of Italy – this section will start with the findings of three media reports, which supply information about the online media sectors of both countries at an early stage of their development. Two of these reports have been produced by the Open Society Foundations (Mazzoleni et al. 2011; Llorens et al. 2011), while the third has been published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Bruno and Nielsen 2012).

To begin with, Mazzoleni et al. (2011) and Llorens et al. (2011) have analysed the crisis of the Italian and Spanish media sectors, respectively, from the early 2000s. Both the reports have highlighted that the phenomenon has been characterised by dropping readerships for printed newspapers and an overall decrease in the number of people using television as a primary source of information. Mazzoleni et al. (2011) and Llorens et al. (2011) have also claimed that, in Italy and Spain, there has been an upward trend in searching and reading the news on the Internet. However, in the case of Italy, this process has initially been negatively affected by a heterogeneous distribution of the broadband networks across Italian regions (Mazzoleni et al. 2011). As a result, citizens could not access the Internet as a provider of news with the same ease across the country and the television service that the RAI-Mediaset duopoly provided was not affected by such an emerging trend.

At that time, according to Mazzoleni et al. (2011), immigration was “one of the most culturally sensitive news issues” (p55-56) in Italy. In 2008, due to the media's widespread tendency to misrepresent migrants, the National Council of the Order of Journalists and the Italian National Press Federation drafted a 'code of conduct' for journalists, the *Carta di Roma* (Rome Charter), in

order to provide guidelines on the wording about migration-related issues in public communication. In addition, in 2011, the 'Rome Charter Observatory' was launched to monitor the media coverage of migration-related issues and produce analyses about the migratory phenomenon. This organisation also has the aim of disseminating information and stimulating debate across different institutions and within academia.

In the past, in Italy and Spain, the websites of traditional daily newspapers were the main sources of information on the Internet, but, in recent years, a process of diversification and wider pluralism has emerged in the media sectors of both countries (Mazzoleni et al. 2011; Llorens et al. 2011; Bruno and Nielsen 2012; Llorens et al. 2013). In Italy, for instance, a few journalistic projects aiming to provide in-depth analyses and independent investigative reporting of national and international news were launched after 2010. As an example, Bruno and Nielsen (2012) have mentioned the digital-born news media *ilpost.it*, *lettera43.it*, and *linkiesta.it*, which started their business with quite large investments thanks to the professional reputation of the journalists who founded them¹.

In Spain, on the other hand, in the 2000s the diffusion of alternative news media paralleled an ongoing large-scale increase in the use of the Internet (Barranquero 2009). Thanks to the active contribution of social movements,

¹ Among emerging projects of independent journalism in Italy, it is worth mentioning the IRPI organisation (Investigative Reporting Project Italy). Its main aims are to expose corruption at political and corporate level and to be a watchdog of democracy which, according to the organisation's members (IRPI 2015), is "a vision little rooted in the panorama of Italian media". The IRPI's official website is: <https://irpi.eu/>.

several independent media projects were launched with the purpose of debating social issues and encouraging new forms of civic participation (Barranquero 2009; Mazzoleni et al. 2011; Llorens et al. 2013). An example of these news platforms is *periodismohumano.com*, the independent digital newspaper funded in 2010 by the Pulitzer Prize winner Javier Bauluz, whose main aim is to scrutinise political power while encouraging and supporting the plurality of information.

Since the economic crisis produced high rates of unemployment in the 2000s, in Spain a variety of social movements, which also employed social networks for their purposes, emerged in order to level criticism against the Spanish parliament's reforms. Online as well as on the streets, their audiences were informed about initiatives at a local and national level and invited to participate in public protests and mobilisations. This emerging citizens' response towards social matters, which, at its core, had ideals of solidarity and resistance as well as a certain disaffection with political institutions' powers, further paved the way for the success of the movement 15-M (*Movimiento de los indignados*). Officially born on the 15th May 2011, the movement 15-M then gave rise to the left-wing political 'anti-party' *Podemos* (Feenstra and Keane 2014).

According to Feenstra and Keane (2014), the economic and political crisis that affected Spanish society in the 2000s “has definitely fuelled an alternative journalism model” in Spain, which “explores the full potential of the Internet” (p1268; also Rubio Jordán 2014). Likewise, Sanchez-González and Palomo-Torres (2014) have pointed out that the Internet has provided private

entrepreneurs as well as the public with the tools that can actually support alternative forms of journalism. The fruitful crowdfunding campaigns through which journalistic initiatives such as *diagonalperiodico.net* were financed, for instance, showed that there was a widespread interest within the population for contributing to projects of social and civic journalism.

Indeed, at that time, social and media organisations around the world started employing online crowdfunding to finance the launch of journalistic projects (Jian and Usher 2014; Bennett et al. 2015)². In this regard, Carvajal et al. (2012) and Hunter (2015) have observed that being financed through crowdfunding campaigns makes journalists feel responsible for providing the services they have been funded for. The economic involvement of citizens in journalistic projects would in fact appear to create a sort of civic bond between journalists and their audience. Since it is ideally based on shared ideals, such a bond would then influence the role perceptions of journalists towards a deeper personal commitment.

Overall, according to Hanitzsch (2007; 2011), the analysis of the role perceptions of journalists should be modelled through three distinct theoretical approaches – interventionism, power distance, and market orientation –, each of them reflecting specific cultural values and working practices. From this perspective, for instance, an ‘interventionist’ attitude would reflect an advocate

² In Spain, an impressive crowdfunding campaign was promoted by *elspanol.com* in 2014-2015. Under the leadership of the Spanish journalist Pedro J. Ramírez, who in 1989 founded *El Mundo*, where he then worked until 2014, that crowdfunding campaign collected 3,606,600 Euros. It had the economic contribution of 5,595 ‘investors’, who shared the aim of a group of journalists to see a new journalistic project founded. Eventually, the digital-born news medium *El Español* was regularly launched in autumn 2015 (data from: *elspanol.com*).

role by journalists (also Himmelboim and Limor 2011). Socially committed journalists would, as a result, tend to participate in the public debate in order to actively address and advance issues of public concern and changes. Within a 'power distance' dimension (Hanitzsch 2007, p373), on the other hand, the adoption by journalists of an adversarial role towards political powers would be more easily identifiable. Finally, the analysis of a 'market' dimension would highlight journalism values such as consumerism. From this perspective, news production would seek profits rather than aiming to inform the public (Hanitzsch 2007, p375). At the same time, the role of audiences would shift from being citizens, to whom an information service is provided, to acting as consumers of media products.

Considering the complexity of the media system in Spain, due to historical and socio-cultural reasons, Hanitzsch's (2007; 2011) approach would be ideal for the discussion of the role perceptions of Spanish journalists. Spain, in fact, has a tripartite online media sector, with an unequal distribution of traditional news media websites, digital-born news media and independent media organisations, and news media platforms that are financially supported by traditional media corporations (Llorens et al. 2011; Llorens et al. 2013). Far from being the representatives of a pluralistic system of information, the latter news media outlets constitute another form of media business (Almiron 2006), which largely reflects the high level of political parallelism within the Spanish media system.

Among the digital-born news media in Spain, on the other hand, there are two successful examples of independent journalism such as *eldiario.es* and

infolibre.es – the former was launched in 2012 after an online campaign of crowdfunding. Both news media outlets claim to safeguard democratic values and human rights, without having any political affiliation, and support themselves through a mixed business model, which is based on the contributions of readers, subscribing in a partnership with the respective news medium, as well as commercial revenues (Rubio Jordán 2014; González-Esteban 2014). In this regard, the case of *eldiario.es* is particularly impressive, since its readership ranks as highly as those of traditional daily newspaper websites.

According to a journalist working at *eldiario.es*, in an interview with González-Esteban (2014), large news media organisations such as *El País* have lost the readership that in the past made them the legitimate representatives of progressive political thinking. From this perspective, the journalist has pointed out that the empty space that *El País* has left within the news media sector has been replaced by *eldiario.es* (González-Esteban 2014).

This idea seems to be reinforced by García Gaibar's (2015) analysis of the current quality of digital-born outlets' investigative journalism in Spain. As an example of quality reporting, García Gaibar (2015) has demonstrated that *eldiario.es* opposed and demolished the government's official version of the events that occurred along Ceuta's shores on 6th February 2014, when 15 migrants drowned in their attempt to reach the Spanish enclave by swimming. At the core of the tragedy was the Spanish police's intervention at sea, during which plastic bullets were shot at migrants – this fact was initially concealed in the official releases of the Spanish government. On that occasion, *eldiario.es*

interviewed 20 of the migrants who were involved in the border crossing and obtained, and published, the video footage from border cameras. Following *eldiario.es*' investigation, 16 border officers of the Spanish *Guardia Civil* were declared responsible for the migrants' deaths.

Through the qualitative analysis of this and other news content, García Gaibar (2015) has stressed that Spanish digital-born news media nowadays fulfil the watchdog role that traditional news media are not able to play. Traditional news media outlets such as *El País* and *El Mundo*, in fact, have to cope with pressures coming from politics as well as commercial and private investors. Although they may effectively exploit technological tools for investigative journalism, for instance in the analysis of online data, traditional news media do not have the freedom to contrast and denounce political corruption and wrongdoing.

García Gaibar's (2015) study seems also to support Gabilondo's (2011) and Gómez-Mompart et al.'s (2015) conclusion about the working practices of Spanish journalists in the online environment. In particular, Gabilondo (2011), a prominent Spanish journalist and TV news anchor, has pointed out that political parties and economic interests have overtaken the service function of journalism³. Acting fast and effectively has thus become the common working mode of journalists, who tend to rely on standardised routines just to be competitive within a globalised news media market (Gabilondo 2011). According

³ Gabilondo (2011), who is very critical about the current Spanish journalistic culture, channels this point effectively with a riddle: "The logic of the communication industry has taken possession of communication" (p39). This is a literal translation from the Spanish quote, which is: "*La lógica de la industria de la comunicación se ha apoderado de la comunicación*".

to Gabilondo (2011), about 90 per cent of Spanish journalists may not even understand the events about which they write. Indeed, they only need to know how the mechanism of news production works to do their job. This would show that a fundamental turning-point in journalists' approach to news has already occurred (Gabilondo 2011, p51).

On the other hand, the survey that Gómez-Mompart et al. (2015) conducted across different types of Spanish news media outlets highlighted that the majority of journalists tend to acknowledge a reduction in the quality of their work. Time constraints, as well as an overall lack of independence from political pressures and market logics, have affected the ability of journalists to differentiate their news reporting and pursue more investigative directions. As a result of this latter situation, one out of three journalists has stressed that the journalistic profession is nowadays largely underrated within society (Gómez-Mompart et al. 2015, p147). In this regard, it is worth mentioning here that the widespread assumption that journalists have political affiliations and interests has damaged Italian journalists' credibility as well (Spalletta and Ugolini 2011).

While focusing on the journalistic work in the online environment, the 60 interviews that Suárez Villegas and Cruz Álvarez (2016) have recently carried out with Spanish, Italian, and Belgian journalists about their professional use of social networks have drawn attention to the possible emergence of their new professional role. By rephrasing journalists' comments, Suárez Villegas and Cruz Álvarez (2016) have summed up such novelty, as follows:

“...journalists are urged to establish a community with citizens; digital trust has moved from the news to the community

management of the information in which journalists assume a role of leadership; the search for the truth has become more collective than ever before, and journalists, in addition to narrating and interpreting events, should help citizens to be part of it. In this way, journalism assumes a more complex role in the digital environment as it is urged to create networks of interaction through which it can demonstrate a real commitment to citizens” (p75).

However, it has been observed that Italian journalists are particularly sceptical about social networks, whether they are exploited as news sources or channels through which news can be disseminated (Fortunati et al. 2009; Fortunati et al. 2010; MacGregor et al. 2011; Suárez Villegas and Cruz Álvarez 2016). In the first decade of the 2000s, journalists did not think about the introduction of the Internet as something that changed their daily practices and routines or their professional role within newsrooms (Fortunati et al. 2009). Rather, at that time, both Italian and Spanish journalists considered print and online journalism as “two distinct jobs” (Fortunati et al. 2009, p953).

As more recent academic studies will demonstrate in the second main section of this chapter, rapid changes within traditional newsrooms have led journalists to reconsider their attitudes towards technology. For instance, Vaccari (2011) has shown that, by 2009, one of the most read Italian daily newspapers, *La Repubblica*, employed online petitions as a technological tool to support political activism against the Berlusconi government⁴.

To sum up, this section has highlighted that the role perceptions of Italian

⁴ Nevertheless, Vaccari (2011) has advised that online petitions were not a “genuine opportunity for citizens to make their voices heard; rather, they (were) devised as tools through which the newspapers (could) show tangible signs of support for their editorial campaigns” (p989).

and Spanish journalists cannot be determined and fixed across time, although there are theoretical models which may be helpful to organise differences across distinct contexts. Furthermore, it has outlined how the emergence of digital-born news media in Italy and even more in Spain has caused ongoing changes in journalistic culture as well as within society. This framework is important to investigate the news narratives about migrant border crossings that the independent editorial projects selected for this study – the Italian *lettera43.it* and *fanpage.it*, and the Spanish *eldiario.es* and *infolibre.es* – produced between 2013 and 2015.

The next section of this chapter will focus on the news as a form of expression of journalistic culture. In particular, the review of the literature will revolve around journalistic practices and the production of news content. Within a cultural framework, news and news production in the online news environment will be explored here in order to prepare the ground for the Italian and Spanish news narratives that will be discussed further, in the third and final part of this chapter.

2.2 News and online narratives

The main aim of the current study is to explore the representation of migrants 'at the border' in Italian and Spanish news narratives. The investigation of news content will be an attempt to shed light on the cultural meanings around which the events of migrant border crossings are organised and portrayed in the news (see also Piazza and Haarman 2011). This will highlight the sets of

assumptions and cultural conventions which are embedded in news production and that make the world 'readable' to the public (Hall et al. 1978; Tuchman 1978; Schudson 1995; Nosssek and Berkowitz 2006; Meikle 2008) while making readers feel an integral part of the society in which they live (Thompson 1995; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Meikle and Redden 2011). In sum, this work will adopt a cultural perspective, from which the news acts as the narrative that maintains and reinforces social structures and common beliefs and that shows who, within society, is entitled to speak about reality and in what form (Soloski 1989; Schudson 1995).

This second main section of the literature review will discuss news production as a form of 'practical knowledge' (Ryfe 2016) of journalists. It will look at the role that technology has played in journalism as a crucial part of the process of news production since the Internet has become a popular means of information. In addition, the distinctive contribution that technological features such as hyperlinks and visuals have given to online news narratives will be outlined. The production of online news, in fact, requires journalists to handle distinct communicative modes such as video and audio, each of them conveying specific pieces of information and meanings. From this perspective, the section will highlight how the introduction of interactive contents in online news has altered the two-dimensional representation of reality, which has been traditionally expressed by means of texts and images (López García 2015).

To begin with, the next section will consider the journalistic practice of news sourcing. The heavy reliance of journalists on political and institutional sources as well as newswire services has seriously affected the representation

of migrants and their crossings of borders in Italian and Spanish news throughout time, a fact that will be demonstrated in the final main section of this chapter.

2.2.1 *News production and cultural practices*

Several studies (Tuchman 1978; 1997; Molotch and Lester 1981; Rock 1981; Hall et al. 1981; Schoemaker and Reese 1996; Berkowitz 1997a) have highlighted that the production of news mainly relies on three factors: sources, the working routines exploiting such sources, and the relationships between journalists and institutions that the process of news-gathering entails. In particular, it has been observed (Carlson and Franklin 2011; Carlson 2011; Domingo and Le Cam 2014; 2015) that the selection of sources by journalists shows who has the authority to make claims about what reality is and what is worth knowing about it.

For instance, the comparison of traditional and digital-born news media's coverage of cases of political corruption in Spain – in *El País* and *El Mundo*, and in *eldiario.es* and *Infolibre*, respectively – has led Pascual (2016) to conclude that there is a substantial difference in the use of news sources by the two types of news media. The first ones employ a consistent number of sources, official as well as confidential, whilst the second ones tend to use a more limited number of official sources, mainly from the judicial field rather than from the political scene. The use of source confidentialities, which is what usually allows traditional news media to publish exclusives, is not frequent in

digital-born news media. On the other hand, both types of news media rely heavily on wire material (Odriozola Chéné and Llorca Abad 2014). From the audience's perspective, Pascual (2016) has also observed that the use of anonymous sources potentially undermines the credibility of news media, since it suggests a possible commitment to political agendas.

Within this framework, Bonafont and Baumgartner (2013) have pointed out that in *El País* and *El Mundo* news coverage of political news is substantially the same, both in terms of topics and the frequency with which political matters are covered. Findings, therefore, have demonstrated that the editorial choices of these two traditional news media seem to depend more on what is considered of interest for readers rather than newspapers' alleged political affiliations (Bonafont and Baumgartner 2013, p73).

With regard to migrants as news actors, it is worth observing here that they are voiceless due to their lack of political power, which prevents them from being represented as direct sources. Rarely described as active actors, migrants are in fact considered mainly as victims and in need of help in different national contexts (Gemi et al. 2013; Domínguez et al. 2014; Mazzara 2015).

From this perspective, Bennett et al. (2013) have tried to identify the journalistic practices that may cause the news media to misrepresent migrants. Through interviews with professional journalists from six European countries, Bennett et al. (2013) have highlighted two important factors affecting migration-reporting: a shortage of time for investigating migration-related issues due to pressing working routines, and an over-reliance on official sources and news agencies, which had first blurred the terminologies related to migration.

Indeed, according to Czarniawska (2012), news agencies act as mediators between the news, which is a product in itself, and the media channels which will eventually disseminate it. In Czarniawska's (2012) own words:

“News agencies produce news in the same way, not because, like other companies, they imitate each other's production process, but because they have access to the same standardized product – the news – which dictates the organization of production” (p201).

Nevertheless, as Paterson (2008) has stressed, news agencies look at each other's work, while aiming to be the first to break the news. In addition, as “the dominant manufacturers of original information” (Paterson 2008, p129), news agencies have developed an articulated mechanism of news gathering, which begins with the decision about what is news and continues with the choice of suitable means for news production – videos, for instance, have become an important asset to these organisations. Such a process certainly affects how journalists cover the news, since they do not draw from independent information (Domingo 2008a). Moreover, as observed by Paterson (2008), when news stories are rejected by news agencies, they may even become local news, “but they *will not be global news* and will have limited historical significance” (p138 – emphasis in original).

From a visual perspective, it has been highlighted (Fahmy 2005; Fahmy and Neumann 2012) that news agencies, by providing pictures and videos, are crucial to audiences' understanding of news events. In particular, Fahmy and

Neumann (2012) have demonstrated that different news agencies disseminate photographs about war contexts that express their individual viewpoints. Since only a few newswire services are available on an international scale, how they visually represent worldwide issues will influence how news media will receive and reproduce news stories (Fahmy and Neumann 2012).

It is also worth noticing here that an increasing use of social media as a source of information (Lecheler and Kruikemeier 2016), and, in particular, of non-elite news sources such as NGOs by news media outlets, may actually be reshaping how the news about humanitarian issues is articulated (Fenton 2010). According to Fenton (2010), the growing role of NGOs in news reporting is due to the level of professionalism that they have reached nowadays, which makes them newsworthy from a journalistic viewpoint, as well as desirable due to the spreading mistrust of civil society towards state actors.

Although non-profit organisations may be in the position to challenge the production of news reporting by providing original materials such as photo-reportages and research reports (Grayson 2014; Powers 2015), their need to match conventional forms of news telling in order to be attractive content makers for journalists leads them to reproduce mainstream news media's discourses and representations (Fenton 2010). In addition, the global proliferation of NGOs since the 1990s has produced a high competitiveness in 'the humanitarian market' (Hopgood and Vinjamuri 2012) and this has resulted in a progressive commercialisation of NGOs' content (Vestergaard 2008; Chouliaraki 2013; Grayson 2014).

It should be considered that the news coverage of humanitarian issues

such as migration has also been challenged by the rise of new technological tools and the spread of Internet-connected devices, as they allow journalists to virtually give a voice to anyone witnessing events around the world. According to Chouliaraki (2013), such an 'event-driven journalism' has weakened the professional notion of verification of sources. The need for communicating the news in real time, in fact, has produced an ethical shift in the moral role of news media, from the narration of the suffering and struggle of distant people to the sensationalism that has become inherent in their representation (Chouliaraki 2013; see also Silverstone 2007; Kitch 2009). As an example of this phenomenon, Chouliaraki (2006) has especially referred to the TV news coverage of the crossings of the Mediterranean by migrants.

From this perspective, Silverstone (2007) has argued that the news media's function of mediation between events and spectators has nowadays turned into the narration of an actual 'distance' between what the news witnesses and those who access news content from afar – in other words, between 'us' and all 'the others'. As a result, such a distance provides the audiences with a specific portrayal and understanding of what occurrences are about and this affects the production of cultural meanings and values at a societal level (Silverstone 2007).

In terms of narrative, the repetition of similar news stories throughout time tends to present the changes of emphasis that highlight specific meanings and viewpoints (Zelizer 1997a; Toolan 2000). However, as an 'eternal recurrence' (Bird and Dardenne 1997), such continuing news mainly leads journalists to reproduce the topics and stereotypes on which their professional

experience has been based (Molotch and Lester 1981; Berkowitz 1997b). In addition, due to the collective knowledge that they share as members of a cultural community, journalists tend to reproduce similar news narratives across different news media organisations (Strentz 1989; Berkowitz 1997a; Berkowitz 1997b; Zelizer 1997b). As a result, the possible ways of representing news stories tend to be limited and, in the long run, such an adherence to already-known narratives affects even the most critical reader (Toolan 2000).

In the next section, the focus of this literature review will concern the current journalistic practices in the online environment as well as the changes in journalism culture that have emerged after the introduction of the Internet within newsrooms.

2.2.2 Communication in the digital environment

Through technological features such as hyperlinks and visuals, the Internet provides online news with a specific structure, in which the hierarchy of news elements is dismantled and the overall news content is dissociated from the variety of its means of expression (López García 2015). As pointed out by Steensen (2009), in the online environment journalism has developed new, more engaging and 'creative' discursive practices.

However, from this perspective, Tandoc (2014) has stressed that online news media nowadays tend to disseminate a disproportionate reporting of small, even trivial, pieces of information through different means of communication. This would highlight the ongoing transformations in journalism

culture that the introduction of new technological features in the daily work of journalists has strengthened, as well as the ways in which news media organisations attempt to adapt to a highly competitive online media market. In this regard, Tandoc (2014) has observed that:

“A process of negotiation is also going on, with journalists modifying existing norms to accommodate the increasing influence of new technology. News judgement now includes acute awareness of what stories did well in the past based on traffic. Headlines are now being tested in terms of which version attracts more clicks” (p572).

As a result of such practices, the agency of journalists as individuals has become an emerging area of academic research (Steensen and Ahva 2015), as highlighted in the first section of this chapter. In a sector in which journalists are witnessing a progressive decline in social prestige (Krzyżanowski 2014), and where editors constantly monitor and rely on online readers' clicks in order to decide what news should be covered (Tandoc 2014; Welbers et al. 2016), norms and values through which journalistic work had been legitimised over time may seem redundant nowadays. Within such a context, the 'process of negotiation' highlighted by Tandoc (2014) is described by Welbers et al. (2016) as the 'conflict' between “what journalists are economically encouraged to do, and what they are normatively inclined to do” (p1050).

Starting from the assumption that current news production in the online environment leads journalists to sensationalise the news in order to fulfil audiences' expectations and interests, Dickinson et al. (2013) have claimed that

there is a growing need for the study of how journalists interpret and understand their working routines and actually perform them. Indeed, the relationship between technological features and journalists' practices may even entail the redefinition of journalistic values to a greater extent (Dickinson et al. 2013).

As Agarwal and Barthel (2015) have stressed, the journalistic practices and routines that are performed in digital-born news media in the U.S. are significantly different from those that are carried out in traditional newsrooms. For instance, the time constraints and economic limitations that characterise journalistic work within digital newsrooms have affected the manner in which news sources are sought and employed. As a form of “copy-past journalism” (Doudaki and Spyridou 2013, p918), sources mainly come from other online platforms and, as a result, news content tends to lack originality and investigation. Such changes in news sourcing have been so substantial, according to the interviews conducted by Agarwal and Barthel (2015), that journalists have had to devalue traditional ideals of journalism such as objectivity and neutrality to the advantage of new professional norms, which involve more personal values such as transparency and self-responsibility.

Technology, according to these emerging patterns, is not simply a means of production (Latour 2002). Rather, it represents a system of mediation between users and the external circumstances in which they operate, having the power to transform the very essence of the actors making use of technology. To clarify this idea, Latour (2002) has given the example of men taking possession of a hammer for the first time. The hammer is a mere tool but, “with it in hand”, the possibilities to perform tasks become, for men,

“endless, providing whoever holds it with schemes of action that do not precede the moment (the hammer) is grasped” (Latour 2002, p250). Technology, therefore, turns its users into something other, whilst its functions and meanings are multiplied by making a habit of its use.

If the Internet is seen as a technology enabling journalists to enact new 'schemes of action' and to rethink and reconfigure professional roles and values, online news production may be interpreted as a form of expression of journalistic culture (also Domingo 2008a). Changes in the practice of journalism, in fact, are not purely formal; they place journalists in the process of news production, as individuals as well as main actors, at the centre of the news media scene (Weaver 2015; Reese 2016).

Studies on the initial phases of Internet utilisation within newsrooms have demonstrated that technology has indeed affected journalism in practical terms (Pavlik 2000; Deuze 2003; Nguyen 2008; Domingo 2008a; 2008b; Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009). It has reduced the time that journalists spend in the field and has changed the way they relate to news sources, which are available online thanks to an increasing number of updated websites and are also easy to access on social media (Trench and Quinn 2003; Franklin 2014; Lecheler and Kruike-meier 2016). In addition, the very spatial hierarchy of newsrooms has been redistributed. In pursuit of more decentralised processes of decision making, senior editors and novices now sit next to each other in environments where time and space limitations are both reduced (Beckett and Mansell 2008; Spyridou et al. 2013).

Although journalism in the digital environment has become

predominantly a desk and technology-based activity (Paterson 2008; Quandt 2008), which entails a process of “filtering and selecting a constant flux of information rather than an active search for stories” (Domingo 2008a, p118), such a structural change has highlighted the emergence of new journalistic practices rather than representing an actual revolution in journalism (Domingo 2008a; Spyridou et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, it has also been pointed out that the Internet has made traditional journalism fall apart by originating new forms of journalism (Deuze 2003; Beckett and Mansell 2008). These involve and depend on technological features such as ‘interactivity’, ‘hypertextuality’, and ‘multimediality’, which have progressively undermined “the ‘we write, you read’ dogma” (Deuze 2003, p220) of journalism as well as journalistic values to a greater extent.

From this perspective, several studies (Trench and Quinn 2003; Singer 2003; Robinson 2006; Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009; Fortunati et al. 2009; Lewis et al. 2014; Murphy 2015; Villegas and Álvarez 2016) have highlighted that, alongside the new expressive potentialities of online news production, new roles of journalists have emerged as well in the online environment. Robinson (2006) and Lewis et al. (2014), for instance, have stressed the importance of the involvement and engagement of citizens in news reporting through interactivity, which drives content shares on social media. In particular, a positive relationship between journalists and audiences seems to be beneficial to a reciprocal trust and tends to strengthen claims to social solidarity (Lewis et al. 2014).

On the other hand, Domingo (2008a; see also Steensen 2011) has

pointed out that interactivity is a 'myth', whose observation might divert researchers' attention away from the materiality of news production, where a variety of actors enact social and cultural practices differently in distinct working environments. Similarly, Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009) have observed that, in journalism studies, the role of technological novelties may be overemphasised and there is consequently the risk of “failing to recognize historical antecedents and evolutionary paths of contemporary practices” (p576).

From a pragmatic point of view, on the other hand, after interviewing 239 journalists in 11 European countries, O'Sullivan and Heinonen (2008) have concluded that the introduction of online features such as interactivity and multimediality into journalists' daily working routines has occurred “quite unproblematically” (p362). Nevertheless, the speed of work that the Internet provides has enhanced competitiveness in the online news media market and this has led to a reduction in journalists' accuracy (O'Sullivan and Heinonen 2008; Singer 2003; García-Avilés 2014; Reich and Godler 2014).

Overall, academic research has mainly focused on how journalists have perceived the introduction of new technological features in their routines and working practices rather than on the ways in which they have actually enacted those tools (Steensen 2011). In this regard, Steensen (2009) has concluded that online journalism is less innovative than previous research had claimed (for instance, Beckett and Mansell 2008) and that the role of individuals in processes of online news production had not been adequately investigated.

In order to approach technology productively, Latour (1986) has

suggested that research interests should move from conceptual categories to the observation of more mundane working processes, in which the enactment of technological features sheds light on transformations within a given culture. In the field of journalism studies, this idea implies that properties of online communication such as interactivity and multimediality, in themselves, do not reveal novelties in journalism culture. The investigation of the enactment of technological features in online news production does.

Accordingly, Spyridou et al.'s (2013) analysis of Greek journalists' usage of technology in a multi-platform news environment has shown that technical tools do not change how journalists perform their job – for instance, they still base their news reporting on official and mainstream sources. Nevertheless, these journalists have started reshaping their role and professional goals by introducing new practices in their daily work. This is observable in journalists' online engagement with audiences through social media. Such a practice is indeed an advertising strategy as it helps journalists boost traffic on the news media websites, and therefore their 'profitability', but it also increases their opportunities to spread the journalistic contents on which they have worked and through which they perform their social role (Spyridou et al. 2013).

In this regard, Joseph (2011) has observed that American journalists adhere to traditional professional values such as accountability, although the manner in which practices such as news-gathering and fact-checking are fulfilled in the online environment has progressively changed. Actually, these journalists make an effort to maintain an adequate level of accountability even when the speed of work may affect their performance negatively. For instance,

they revealed that, in terms of production of online news content, they experience an overall “satisfaction with the immediacy with which they are able to present news consumers with correct information once an error has been found” (Joseph 2011, p710). According to Joseph (2011), therefore, the ethical principles of traditional journalism culture also lead the new processes of news production in the online environment.

This has been confirmed by Pihl-Thingvad (2015), who has pointed out that contemporary working practices are as important as the professional ideals on which journalists base their work. Take objectivity, for instance. It can be considered a practical norm as well as an ideal of journalism, since it is “connected to the notion of value-free journalism produced by the totally detached journalists” (Skovsgaard et al. 2013, p25). Nevertheless, objectivity can be seen also as a 'practical tool', whose claim serves to legitimise journalistic work. From this perspective, Skovsgaard et al. (2013) have observed that, in the case of Danish journalists, personal commitment to ethical values is the key factor determining the quality of journalistic work. A low level of commitment, in fact, tends to unmask the existence of discrepancies between principles and practice and the consequent journalists' dissatisfaction, which affects their work negatively (Pihl-Thingvad 2015).

To sum up, this section of the Literature Review has demonstrated that journalists working in the online environment tend to negotiate traditional ideals and values of journalism across different cultural contexts and through the specific practices that online news production entails. With regard to news narratives about migrant border crossings, the current study will thus explore

practices and routines of Italian and Spanish journalists in order to understand how the news has been produced in practical terms. In particular, since migration from Africa to both Italy and Spain has been a long-lasting phenomenon, this study intends to verify whether dedicated organisational practices have emerged within online newsrooms throughout time.

In the next two brief sections, journalistic tools such as hyperlinks and visuals will be explored as key aspects of online news narratives. The discussion of the methodological approach that will be put into practice later on in this study will then clarify the role that such technological features seem to play in the production of online news narratives about migrant border crossings.

2.2.3 Hyperlinks

Although hyperlinks do not always refer to news sources, they constitute a specific attribute of online news (Steensen 2009; Larrondo Ureta 2011; De Maeyer 2014). By including them into news texts, online communication demonstrates the emergence of new priorities in news production such as the development of news content and the offer of alternative sources of information (Phillips 2010; Meikle and Redden 2011; McChesney 2011). As 'material traces' of online discourses, hyperlinks strengthen the information that is provided by official sources and introduce new, alternative, perspectives on story-telling (De Maeyer and Le Cam 2015). While using hyperlinks, journalists direct news narratives towards supplementary analyses and, ultimately, change the way they relate to audiences, which nowadays share and comment on the news

through a variety of online channels.

In Italy, however, such a form of interactivity seems not to be perceived as an opportunity. Rather, online readers prefer to navigate newspapers' websites anonymously, without concretely contributing to the news content or to a broader online conversation about news matters (Fortunati et al. 2010). In Spain, on the other hand, where traditional newspapers such as *El País* have begun to diversify online content only recently, the practice of enriching news articles with hyperlinks has been increasingly improved (Recio et al. 2009; Fondevila Gascón and Jiménez 2012).

As shown in the first section of this chapter, digital-born news media in Italy and Spain have emerged as a response to unsatisfactory traditional media systems (Atton 2011; Humprecht and Buchel 2013). They have also claimed to adopt new approaches to news-telling. Accordingly, in the context of the current study, hyperlink contents are considered an important part of the news narratives about migrant border crossings, although it is also possible that, after an initial enthusiasm for the narrative possibilities that they offer, hyperlinks may not have become a crucial aspect of news coverage. Their usage, in fact, may have been subjected to time and economic constraints in the online environment (Karlsson et al. 2015).

2.2.4 *Images in online news*

Although scholars agree that images are what first attract readers while reading the news, how they affect audiences' understanding of news content is

still an under-researched area of knowledge (Fahmy 2010; Huang and Fahmy 2011; Zawawi et al. 2014; Powell et al. 2015; Pogliano 2015). The current study intends to highlight, through the analysis of visuals about migrant border crossings, the relationship that images and videos have with the news texts accompanying them. Within the text-image relationship (Bateman 2014), the analysis is expected to shed light on the stereotypes and assumptions that have led journalists to choose certain news pictures and videos among those at their disposal.

Since images are usually provided by news agencies, journalists may not have a direct knowledge of the events that are represented there and their choices would thus emphasise preconceptions as well as communicative intentions (Fahmy 2010; Huang and Fahmy 2011; Powell et al. 2015). Similarly, the choice of news pictures portraying scenes of violence and migrants' deaths by Italian and Spanish online news media will help the analysis of news items, by drawing attention to the cultural values and social attitudes that such editorial choices highlight (Hanusch 2009; Hanusch 2012; Hernández 2014), as well as the emotions through which editors seek to engage audiences and increase web-traffic (Beckett and Deuze 2016).

Furthermore, it is worth noticing here that the values and professional identity of photojournalists have been challenged by the rise of social media and digital technology, as well as by the increasing gathering of non-professional images by news media organisations (Mäenpää 2014; Pogliano 2015). In particular, the large production of images by citizens as eyewitnesses of critical moments such as the London bombing in 2005 and the earthquakes in Haiti

and Japan in 2010 and 2011, respectively, has led photojournalists to provide new services such as videos and to perform new practices involving, for instance, more extreme choices of photo-editing and manipulation (Bock 2011; Mäenpää 2014; Bock 2016).

In this regard, the analysis of the use of video content by eight major Spanish news media (Pila and Serrano 2014), including *eldiario.es*, has demonstrated that videos have become an integral part of news communication. This growing trend has been highlighted also by Ramirez de la Piscina et al. (2015). After interviewing journalists in six European countries, including Italy and Spain, Ramirez de la Piscina et al. (2015) have reported that the development of video production and new audiovisual narratives are indeed among the strategies that journalists nowadays are adopting to revitalise the news media sector. Spanish news media outlets make great use of news agencies such as *Efe* and *Reuters*, television platforms, and the Internet more broadly in order to provide timely video content (Pila and Serrano 2014). From this perspective, Pila and Serrano (2014) have observed that the constant employment of YouTube as a news channel is noteworthy – the phenomenon has also opened on to the creation of individual YouTube channels by Spanish news media outlets themselves (p228).

In sum, in the current study, the analysis of news narratives and visuals about migrant border crossings is expected to identify meanings referring to migrants and migration more broadly as well as the institutional actors operating at the border, as the research focus concerns the two distinct geographical areas in which the European Union's borders overlap the southern borders of

Italy and Spain. Since their practices of border management and control challenge the very notion of national identity and sovereignty as well as the European Union as a political project, the borders between Libya and Italy and Morocco and Spain will be discussed in the next and final part of this chapter as an additional theoretical framework.

At the end of this chapter, the original features and limitations of the work will be considered and an outline of the areas of research in the field of journalism studies to which this work intends to contribute will be presented, by employing a comprehensive analysis of the representation of migrants 'at the border' in Italian and Spanish online news media.

2.3 Borders and migrant representation in Italy and Spain

The title of this study refers to news narratives about migrants 'at the border' to draw attention to two different aspects of research: the geographical contexts of migration from Africa towards Europe – the borders between Libya and Italy and Morocco and Spain –, and the analytical framework through which news narratives about migrant border crossings are explored. As migration clashes with national and supranational institutions and powers at the borders, whose role and legitimacy are defined and reproduced in the news, a critical analysis of such narratives will reveal distinctive representations of migrants as well as institutional responses to migrant border crossings, which are expressed through operations of migration management and border control.

Through the lens of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders, the

current study focuses on the relationships between the migrants and political actors, such as European governments' and the European Union's representatives, that may be involved in news narratives about the border crossings. In addition, it highlights processes of production of meanings about migration as well as the possible political justifications for border control. To achieve these main aims, this study's theoretical framework has drawn on Mezzadra and Neilson's (2013) notion of border as an 'epistemological device'.

According to this approach (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), the existence of borders raises issues which relate to territories and political subjectivities such as state sovereignty and citizenship. Borders are not just lines or walls; rather, they entail the production of meanings at a political, economic, and juridical level, since they activate inside-outside conceptual distinctions. Borders allow states to filter the type of people who can access their territories and predetermine what position they will have in society; for instance, by limiting their labour choices through visa requirements (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Casas-Cortes et al. 2015). Around the idea of borders and national security, governments set their apparatus of defence, which distinguishes between who is legitimised to cross the physical border and who, in contrast, will be designated as 'illegal' people (Andreas 2000; 2003; De Genova 2013).

From this perspective, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) consider borders as the theoretical device through which cultural and societal phenomena can be explored and the dynamics of their production understood. In the Italian context, the concept of border has been employed this way in Cuttitta's (2014), Brambilla's (2014), and Dines et al.'s (2015) works. Their research has

demonstrated how the Italian island of Lampedusa has been turned into a primary border of Italy, and Europe more broadly, through a process of political construction starting in the early 2000s (see also Ricci 2015). At that time, in fact, the conjunction of migration management practices such as the forced landing of the migrants rescued at sea and the establishment of a detention centre on the island, as well as public discourses about an assumed 'immigration crisis' by politicians, have turned Lampedusa into a major hotspot for immigration from Africa at a European level.

In the Spanish case, on the other hand, Ferrer-Gallardo (2008) and Campesi (2012) have shown that, since the early 1990s, increasing European investments into the borders of Melilla and Ceuta for security purposes have strengthened Spain's sense of belonging to the wider European Union's community, which it joined in 1986, as well as Spanish identity itself. Nevertheless, according to these studies (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008; Campesi 2012), academic research has insistently neglected the socio-political processes that have progressively converted the two autonomous Spanish cities, Melilla and Ceuta, into spaces of migration management and control on the European Union's behalf.

Similar, Sassen (1996) and Vertovec (2009) have pointed out that critical analyses of the historical and economic relationships between origin and destination countries, which link migration flows, have often been publicly dismissed. They (Sassen 1996; Vertovec 2009) have also observed that, through the analytical lens of border, the investigation of migration-related contexts reveals a complexity of power relations between states and societal

and institutional actors as well as ongoing processes of meaning production. The migratory phenomena are in fact crucial in the ideological construction of discourses legitimating social and political structures.

According to Quijano (2000) and Grosfoguel et al. (2014), employing a colonial perspective, which denaturalises power relationships between sending and destination countries, encourages racism to emerge as a form of “global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority” (Grosfoguel et al. 2014, p4). Indeed, the idea of race informs Western culture as well as the culture of the migrants who, ultimately, find themselves trapped within territorial and social divisions at the borders (Quijano 2000; Grosfoguel et al. 2014), where white Eurocentric interests over commercial trades and control over the labour market are promoted by the European countries (Hamood 2008; Dotson-Reuta 2012).

By adopting a colonial perspective, Mignolo (2007) has suggested scholars may critically investigate borders as spaces where common colonial pasts connect the struggle of different identities and cultures, and rethink the very notion of modern state. The idea of 'modernity' itself, in fact, according to Mignolo (2007), implies an attempt at dominion over non-European people by Western culture. As “modernity” designates “the point of arrival” of culture (p450), it entails a certain way to understand and act in the world. From this perspective, Mignolo (2007) has looked at the construction of cultural and physical borders in the colonial era as the framework within which “the terms of the conversation” that have shaped the hierarchy of powers in global society (p459) can be denaturalised and redefined.

In a similar fashion, Torpey (2000) has investigated the historical

construction of borders in the United States and Western Union in order to demonstrate that modern states began strengthening their political role within an international context particularly after World War II, with the introduction of the current passport. While regulating people's movement across countries, an official document such as the passport was beneficial to the naturalisation of the relationship between territory and individuals' identity. At a last resort, it asserted a state's power over people by restricting their movements (Torpey 2000).

Mezzadra and Neilson (2013), who have taken Mignolo's (2007) 'border thinking' further, have highlighted how the 'proliferation' of borders that reshaped the geopolitical order during the European imperial era in the twentieth century has been functional to the capitalist economic system. As Sassen (1996) and Vertovec (2009) also did, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) have stressed that worldwide cultural transformations have emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall as a result of globalisation processes.

In the 1990s, when new social and political identities came into existence, "flows, hybridization, smooth space, flatland, the global/local nexus, and postnationalism were some of the key words that circulated (...) in both mainstream and critical idioms" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, p61). At that time, borders began to play a crucial role in regulating the world market precisely by producing new forms of business across states as well as creating laws and political subjects at a national and international level. Since borders act as filters for the dislocation and selection of labour, they are at the core of the exploitation of migrants as a cheap labour force (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, as will be clarified further in this chapter.

To sum up, while looking at the representation of migrants and migrant border crossings in Italian and Spanish news media, the current work will take into account the complexity of power relations that is enacted at the borders between Libya and Italy and Morocco and Spain. Their representations, in fact, may be redefining the very meanings of migration towards Europe as well as reaffirming the roles of the political actors involved in it. According to these premises, the next section will highlight the historical and ideological constructions of the European Union's southern border, which overlaps the Italian border in the Mediterranean Sea and the Spanish border in Melilla and Ceuta and in the Strait of Gibraltar, and the cross-states political relationships that migrant border crossings have revealed there.

2.3.1 Schengenland, security and border control

Although a unified European immigration policy does not exist, European member states started developing common strategies for migration flow management from the 1990s, during a process of reform of the European Union's institutions that started with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 and was further consolidated by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 (Triandafyllidou and Ilies 2010; Bialasiewicz et al. 2012; Casas-Cortes et al. 2012; Feldmano 2012). At the core of this process were the ideas of a European identity, having democratic principles that enabled the EU to play a leading role at an international level (Osswald and Wessels 1982), as well as the freedom of movement, capital, labour, goods, and services across the European countries,

which was inaugurated by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and then included in the Schengen Agreement in 1985 (Anderson 2000).

The Schengen Agreement, which proposed the complete abolition of border checks between the five countries which first approved it – France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands – remained a declaration of intent at least until 1995, when it eventually came into force. When, in 1997, the Agreement was incorporated into the Treaty of Amsterdam, the European Union was legally provided with a border-defined territory.

As highlighted by Feldman (2012), with the Treaty of Amsterdam, immigration and asylum regulations have been moved into the first of the three legal Pillars of the European Union law, next to police and judicial matters (p61-62). Under this Pillar, the European Council could legislate about the procedures to be adopted at a European level without the need for a unanimous vote of the European Union's member states.

The reforms of the European Union occurring in the 1990s signalled an important step towards common migration policies between the European member states; and yet their formulation attracted widespread criticism (Fekete 2009; Pacella 2011; Hansen and Jonsson 2011; Feldman 2012; Martínez Guillem 2015). The main reasons for concern were first, that the notion of EU citizenship was reinforced while non-white immigrants were stigmatised on the basis of legal norms and secondly, that the type and the number of migrants admitted to enter the European Union were determined by the demographic needs and market demands of the European member states.

In the 1990s, the European Union's immigration policies were also

combined with a series of trade partnerships with non-EU countries in the Mediterranean region, which were further developed under the umbrella of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in the early 2000s (Triandafyllidou and Ilies 2010; Uruburu Colsa 2011; Casas-Cortes et al. 2012; Brambilla 2014). With these bilateral co-operations, the European Union aimed to externalise migration management practices in non-EU territories in exchange for the creation of free trade zones, from which third countries' local living conditions were supposed to benefit.

It has been observed (White 1999; Campaniello 2014), however, that the effects of liberalising the trade with neighbouring countries have been to increase, rather than mitigate, migration to the European Union. The expected outcomes of such partnerships were in fact compromised by the significance of the remittances for developing countries' economies and by the increasing potential for movement between EU and non-EU countries.

In addition to the ENP, in the first decade of the 2000s the European Union had already invested in highly technological security systems for controlling its maritime borders along the African coast. In Morocco, for instance, the Integrated System of External Vigilance (SIVE) was permanently located to monitor the Spanish coastal region. In addition, a multi-layered and three meter high fence along the Melilla border was funded (Levy 2010; Pacella 2011) – the height of this fence was then doubled in 2005. In addition, in northern and western Africa, the EU promoted the construction of numerous refugee camps, which later turned into detention facilities where migrants were held and often tortured by local authorities and militia – the case of Libya is

particularly well-documented in this regard (see Levy 2010; Hamood 2008; De Cesari 2012; Andrijasevic 2010; Mountz and Loyd 2013; Vaughan-Williams 2015).

The European Union's process of externalisation of border control has coincided with the juridical construction of 'Schengenland' (Walters 2002) and with the political perception of immigration as a threat to Western countries. As Bialasiewicz et al. (2012) have suggested, the process of 'region building' has reflected the European Union's attempt to '(re)territorialise' the spaces outside its geographical borders according to its own political priorities. It is worth noticing here that the development of this process, due to market reasons, has been visible in the Mediterranean region since the 1950s (Osswald and Wessels 1982).

Furthermore, Sassen (1996) has observed that, as a response to the increasing cross-border flows of goods and people produced by the capitalist system and as a result of the externalisation of migration management practices, national sovereignties have been split into a range of private and public institutions, among which there are supranational organisations such as the European Union (Sassen 1996; Vertovec 2009; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

Overall, this section has presented the geopolitical ambitions of the European Union in order to provide the background to the current migration management at the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders. This is also the context in which the news narratives about migrant border crossings that will be analysed further have been produced by Italian and Spanish news media. The

next section will explore migration towards Italy and Spain and will show that the conceptual construction of the European Union's southern border is involved in the representation of migrants as 'illegals' in both countries. Political discourses at a national and a European level, in fact, have influenced the Italian and Spanish news media communication about migration and, as a result, the overall news narrative about migrant border crossings from Africa to Europe.

2.3.2 *When migrants became 'illegal'*

Italy and Spain share similar histories of immigration, at least since the 1960s. Migrants from the Maghreb, attracted by the informal and seasonal labour market in the southern regions of both countries, fulfilled the market demand in the tourism, construction, and agriculture sectors, in the latter of which they were employed irregularly in harvesting citrus fruits, tomatoes, and olives (King 2000; Triandafyllidou 2010; Caponio 2014). This form of immigration was spontaneous, lacking any immigration policy or integration program, and a visa was not required (González-Enríquez 2009; Campomori and Caponio 2013). In this section of the chapter, how such an immigration phenomenon has affected the perception of migrants in Italy and Spain, starting from the 1990s, will be debated.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Italy and Spain were known to be tolerant towards their shadow economies employing African migrants. For this reason they were considered as 'soft-bordered' by the other European countries

(Bonifazi 2000; Bialasiewicz et al. 2012). Their entry into the Schengen Area was thus subject to improved border management practices, which were approved in Italy and Spain only in 1997 and 1995, respectively. In order to fulfil the European Union's requests for a careful migration management, the Italian and Spanish governments began planning frequent migrant regularisations (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; González-Enríquez 2010; Fasani 2010). In addition, they tried to limit the number of migrant workers on their territory through the definition of annual quotas, whose forecasts were “always so obviously unrealistic” (González-Enríquez and Triandafyllidou 2009, p113).

In the 1990s, however, when rising unemployment spread across Europe, in Italy and Spain migrants began to be blamed for being the cause of the phenomenon (González-Enríquez 2010; Caponio 2014). Furthermore, the European Union's member states started focusing on immigration management as a solution for their internal market problems. Later on, to increase the effectiveness of immigration policies, measures of 'remote border control' such as visa requirements were introduced at a European level. The official event at which these issues were agreed was the Tampere Summit organised in Finland in 1999 (Lahav and Guiraudon 2000; Moreno Lax 2008; García Agustín 2008; Triandafyllidou and Ilies 2010; Feldman 2012).

In the 1990s, during this ongoing process of legitimation of the European Union as a supranational power, the construction of the 'illegality' of migrants began. After the abolition of the internal border checks in 1995, several European member states started perceiving their national security as threatened and migrants, who were commonly linked to security problems,

began to be represented almost exclusively through a 'bureaucratic-judicial language' (Montali et al. 2013; see also Collinson 2000; Dauvergne 2008).

In addition, as scholars in different disciplines have highlighted (De Cillia et al. 1999; Leach and Zamora 2006; Wodak 2006; Van Dijk 1999; 2006; Garner 2007; Moreno Lax 2008; Magnani 2011; Quassoli 2013), mainstream media tended to reproduce political discourses about migration management and merge concepts involving different areas of intervention, such as immigration management and asylum policies. They also started blurring the lines between the meaning of words such as 'refugees', 'asylum seekers', and 'labour migrants' and to reproduce such words in combination with negative adjectives such as 'illegal'.

Despite the negativity used to portray the issue of migrants, the fact that European governments were actually seeking to regulate migrants' entry into their countries according to the needs of their own labour markets was not a matter for discussion by the media (Magnani 2011; Quassoli 2013). Political discourses tended to represent immigration “as a *structural and natural phenomenon* determined by push factors which could not possibly be opposed” (Magnani 2011, p652 – emphasis in original). In order to tackle such 'push factors', which mainly referred to the migrants' poor living conditions in their countries of origin, European governments started negotiating cooperation actions with sending countries on the basis of economic interests.

In the first decade of the 2000s, when the reinforced entry requirements for non-EU citizens had pushed migrants into undertaking perilous routes towards Europe such as those across the Mediterranean Sea (de Haas 2008;

Andrijasevic 2010; Grant 2011), migrant representation in the public debate was twofold: on the one hand, migrants were portrayed as threatening the national security of European countries; on the other hand, they were the victims of both their home countries' poverty and the traffickers arranging their dangerous border crossings (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; Follis 2015). It is worth mentioning here that trafficking of migrants in itself was considered a security threat by European countries as it sabotaged states' immigration policies at the border (Tsardanidis and Guerra 2000).

At that time, the risks that the dangerous routes of migrant boats across the Mediterranean entailed were exploited in public discourse by politicians for the 'criminalisation' of immigration. Such crossings were in fact depicted as a clear attempt to violate immigration law and provided both juridical and paternalistic reasons for state intervention at the border (De Genova 2013; Dines et al. 2015; Casas-Cortes et al. 2015). There, private guards, police forces, and highly technological systems of surveillance were massively deployed while governments claimed to undertake rescue operations at sea. In this context, the display of state intervention made the 'illegality' of migrant crossings 'objective'; the border itself became the scene on which the 'spectacle' of the illegality of migrants could be exhibited (De Genova 2013).

However, as Pezzani and Heller (2013) have observed, it is the deployment of vessels, helicopters, and submarines patrolling the sea that actually makes a maritime border visible. Therefore, migrant routes are what actually exhibit the "violent political and legal exclusion" through which migration is tackled by European governments (Pezzani and Heller 2013, p292).

After the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011, the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean Sea and the Strait of Gibraltar as well as the border fences in Melilla and Ceuta began to occur more frequently and, as will be discussed in the next section, political elites in Italy and Spain took advantage of such a migratory phenomenon, which has been covered superficially by news media in both countries. Within this framework, the time frame for the analysis of news narratives in the current study will start in September 2013. In particular, it will look at the news items that were published after a shipwreck on 3rd October 2013, when the death of about 360 migrants near the Italian island of Lampedusa drew international attention to the Mediterranean region and the migration phenomenon as a whole.

2.3.3 Italy and Spain: migration and the news media

A large majority of the migrants living in Europe irregularly is constituted by those who reached their destinations by plane and then overstayed their visa (Andrijasevic 2006; Błuś 2013). Only a small portion of the migrants arriving in Italy and Spain have therefore physically crossed the Sea or the border fences in Melilla and Ceuta (de Haas 2008; Andrijasevic 2010; Vieira 2016). Despite that, since the 1990s the public debate in both countries has focused on migrants as 'illegal' people, as 'criminals', and migrant border crossings have shaped the conditions under which restrictive measures at the border have been justified by governments (Pastore et al. 2006; González-Enríquez 2009; Longhi 2013; Montali et al. 2013; Raeymaekers 2014; Martínez Lirola 2014).

Furthermore, Italian and Spanish news media have represented the arrivals of migrants in the two countries as an 'invasion' and have claimed that the difficulties of migrants' integration in society were due to cultural differences, seen as a social problem (de Haas 2008; Triandafyllidou 1999; Fekete 2009; Llorent 2012; Triandafyllidou 2013; Gemi et al. 2013; Grobet 2014; Vieira 2016).

As highlighted by Triandafyllidou (1999), in the 1990s what actually emerged from the public debate about the integration of migrants was the idea that the national identity was under threat. In particular, in the case of Italy, Triandafyllidou (1999) has highlighted that "ethnicity, civic traditions, territory and culture (were) the main dimensions used by the press to differentiate immigrants from Italians" (p76); language and religion were 'rarely mentioned'.

Later on, particularly after the Tampere Summit in 1999, migration became a priority within the European Union, which began a harmonisation process of the immigration policies of its member states. In the following years, and in line with the political focus on security issues at a European level, in Italy and Spain the media started producing discourses of 'criminalisation' of immigration (Gonzalez-Enriquez 2009; 2010; Cecchi 2011; Magnani 2011), which were mainly based on stereotypes and a profusion of political speeches and legislative interventions towards migration issues (Igartua and Muñiz 2004; Fasani 2010; Checa and Arjona 2011; Corrado 2011).

For instance, Italian politicians began to exploit the fact that migrants arriving in Italy after crossing the Mediterranean were generally undocumented, in order to reinforce the idea that they were all fundamentally criminals (Longhi 2013). On the other hand, according to Colombo and Sciortino (2004; also

Sciortino and Colombo 2004), Italian newspapers tended to portray stories of migrants mainly on the crime pages, where governmental sources such as the police and the courts dominated news narratives. As a result, traditional news media contributed to reinforcing the idea that migrants were criminals. From this perspective, after analysing the results of two different public surveys on workers' attitudes towards immigrants, Colombo and Sciortino (2004) concluded that the common negative attitude towards migrants mainly depended on mainstream media discourses. A large majority of the survey interviewees, in fact, had never had personal contacts with immigrants.

As outlined in the first section of this chapter, in Italy as well as Spain news sources such as politicians and institutional organisations have been central to the news media coverage of migrant border crossings and migration in general. To reinforce this, it is worth observing that Italian as well as Spanish political parties tended to leverage their electorate's feelings towards immigration in order to influence their opinions, and so their votes, by means of the press (Veugelers 1994; Garner 2007; González-Enríquez 2009). Over time, in public discourse the representation of migrant border crossings shifted from the idea of invasion, which was seen as a primary threat to the national security of both Italy and Spain (Igartua and Muñiz 2004; White 2007; de Haas 2008; Vollmer 2011; De Genova 2013; Martínez Lirola 2014; Cuttitta 2014) to a more paternalistic and humanitarian approach (De Genova 2013; Martínez Lirola 2014; Vaughan-Williams 2015; Caviedes 2015; Dines et al. 2015).

The analysis of the headlines and news articles that the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* published between 1992 and 2009 (Montali et al.

2013) has demonstrated that, after an initial phase in which illegality was the main feature in migrant representation, an increasing *ethnicisation* of crime emerged from the news. The media, in fact, used to associate specific offences and forms of deviance such as alcoholism to distinct ethnic groups – prostitution, for instance, was usually linked to Nigerians and Albanians. This type of connection between crime, negative attitudes, and specific groups of foreign people started spreading the belief that certain behavioural traits pertained to precise cultural contexts (see also Faloppa 2015). In this way, the Italian media tended to stress feelings of cultural belonging through the emphasis on shared civic values, as highlighted in the news coverage of immigration from 1990 and 1995 by Triandafyllidou (1999).

In recent years, on the other hand, Vieira (2016) has pointed out that the focus of news narratives about the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean has been the legitimisation of the political powers of supranational institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations. According to Vieira (2016), after October 2013, and particularly after April 2015, when about 1,000 migrants drowned in two consecutive shipwrecks, the main actors and sources of information in the news have become national and international politicians. Due to their public role, in fact, they constantly monitor the migratory flows in the Mediterranean region thanks to operations of border control and search and rescue such as those conducted by institutional agencies such as FRONTEX and UNHCR as well as NGOs such as Amnesty International and Doctors without Borders.

Since migration is nowadays considered “a terrible humanitarian crisis”,

such an emergency in the Mediterranean has become “a political priority, separated from the national space, debated and with solutions sought at the international scale” (Vieira 2016, p16). Furthermore, Vieira (2016) and Montali et al. (2013) have observed that, alongside words such as 'exodus' and 'waves of refugees', migration has consistently been represented by images of boats crowded with migrants, whose context has been provided only through numbers and lists of events about migrant border crossings as a single 'block' of information (Montali et al. 2013; see also Bettini 2012; Mazzara 2015).

According to Bettini (2012), the strategic use of 'apocalyptic narratives' in official reports and documents, which are distributed by press offices and news agencies to news media, serve as a form of depoliticisation of migration. Such narratives, in fact, deprive migrants of their political subjectivity as well as migration of its historical and geo-political contexts. Since, according to these narratives, migration does not fall under political responsibility, military intervention is suggested there as the only possible response (Bettini 2012).

In this regard, Vieira (2016) has highlighted that Europe in itself has been represented by the Italian online news media *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* as “an insensitive military fort” (p13). Montali et al. (2013), on the other hand, have stressed that, even during the first decade of the 2000s, metaphors of war were employed by the daily newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* to describe the ‘danger’ of migration when reporting episodes involving migrants such as urban riots and tuberculosis in children of migrants. In this latter case, Italian schools were represented as ‘biological bombs’ because of migrant students, who were accused of re-introducing infections such as tuberculosis that were supposed to

have been eradicated (Montali et al. 2013, p243).

Similarly, Musarò (2016) has observed the presence of a 'war imaginary' in Italian news narratives since the Italian Navy operation *Mare Nostrum* was launched on 14th October 2013, as a response to the shipwreck which occurred on 3rd October near Lampedusa. Founded as a search and rescue operation, *Mare Nostrum* intended to target and arrest migrant smugglers at sea – its mission, therefore, has represented “a transformative moment in the communication strategies of Italy” about immigration in the Mediterranean (Musarò 2016, p11).

Musarò (2016) has focused on the informative materials, images, and videos that the Italian Navy itself has produced during the year (October 2013 – October 2014) in which *Mare Nostrum* has been operative. In particular, the analysis (Musarò 2016) has concerned a documentary that the Italian Navy has co-produced together with the Italian national television (RAI), in which rescuers of migrants at sea have been recorded during a two-month period – the film was broadcast in October 2014. As a result, Musarò (2016) has demonstrated, such a documentary as well as other visual materials by the Italian Navy have shaped the social imaginary “through moral discourses of care and responsibility” (p16). In Musarò's (2016) own words:

“Speaking the language of combating human smuggling and potential terrorists, while rescuing lives and protecting migrants' human rights, *Mare Nostrum* (has) perform(ed) the spectacle of the ‘humanitarian battlefield’” (p16).

“...most of the photographs trigger sympathy for the soldiers and pity for the migrants. There are plenty of images that portray the

soldiers' activities with the aim to draw us into a community of witnesses. Emphasising practices and discourses of care, aid and assistance, soldiers covered this operation as a humanitarian national benevolence. (...) these images invite us to experience the 'humanitarian battlefield' through a subjectivist aesthetic, which places a moral imagination of expressive sentimentality at the heart of war" (p18).

In extending this perspective, Dines et al. (2015) have argued that, in such a war-like scenario, a 'hierarchical distinction' emerges between rescuers and soldiers and the migrants who are 'saved'. Evidence for this position lies in the 'insensitiveness' of news images of migrants' naked bodies floating on the sea. Such portrayals in fact imply the conditions of degradation in which migrants may live once in Italy to those migrants who aim to cross the Mediterranean Sea, as well as the "subordinate position of migrants" (Dines et al. 2015, p432) within Italian society to a general public. In other words, by stressing the risks of immigration across the Mediterranean, the news representation here aims to educate about the consequences of migrant attempts to reach Italy through irregular means while also reassuring citizens about the state's intention to maintain the distinction between Italians and 'the others' (Dines et al. 2015).

In Spain as well, in the first decade of the 2000s, the public attention given to immigration was twofold. At first, there was a concern for the exploitation of migrant labour in the Spanish shadow economy; then, a more paternalistic approach emerged, which focused on migrant arrivals as a result of an increase in human trafficking across the Strait of Gibraltar. An example of the former scenario has been provided by the violent racist riots between migrants,

mainly undocumented Moroccans, and locals that broke out in the small community of El Ejido, southern Spain, in 2000, following the killing of two Spaniards, for which Moroccans were the alleged culprits (Amnesty International 2002; González-Enríquez 2009).

Although the riots were fomented by racial tension, it has been observed (Martínez Veiga 2001) that at their core there was concern about the labour flexibility of the migrants irregularly employed in agriculture in the region, which had nourished the locals' perception that migrants were just 'a means of production'. Therefore, besides the fact that migrants were considered as 'replaceable' as any other agricultural instrument, their troublemaking behaviour was not tolerated (Martínez Veiga 2001).

After the events which occurred in El Ejido, the Spanish news media started supporting and disseminating the idea that the social integration of migrants within Spanish society was problematic to such an extent that migration became a problem in itself (De la Fuente García 2007). At the same time, trade unions and NGOs “repeatedly accused the government of tacitly favouring irregular immigration in order to make cheap labour readily available” (González-Enríquez 2010, p263).

Later on, the Spanish news media representation of migrants began to shift onto narratives of human trafficking, exploitation, and deaths at sea and positive portrayals of migrants as integrated individuals within society were virtually absent in the news (González-Enríquez 2010). News media, in fact, tended to emphasise the stories of those migrants who tried to reach Spain in small fishing boats, called *pateras*, since they were considered to have “an

extraordinary effect on public opinion” (González-Enríquez 2010, p263).

Furthermore, discrimination towards migrants emerged from the news pictures documenting the crossings of the border fence in Melilla as well (Muñiz Muriel et al. 2008). These images cognitively connected migrants to crime and delinquency by continuously representing them as attempting to enter Spain illegally. As a result, according to Lirola (2017), this negative portrayal has contributed to depriving migrants of their individual identities and human rights; they are usually depicted in groups and in the act of fighting with border guards.

Within this scenario, Domínguez et al. (2014) have provided an explanation of such a form of migration-telling by reflecting on the cartoons that have represented migrants' journeys from Africa by *pateras* in seven major Spanish newspapers, among which there were *El País* and *El Mundo*, from 2006 to 2012. There, *pateras* were depicted as baguettes, or pieces of meats, to represent the 'pursuit of prosperity' by migrants; they were also coffins, to highlight the risks concerning migrant border crossings. In those cartoons, Africa itself could become a boat, which sailed the Sea, crowded with migrants. The migrant boats, therefore, were metaphors of a broader context of migration from Africa. Domínguez et al. (2014) have observed further examples in which migrants were usually depersonalised in the cartoons, “faceless blurs cramped into the same boat” (p817), in line with the Spaniards' perception of immigration as a phenomenon that was made up of numbers and lists of news events, without a context from which a genuine understanding could arise.

At the same time, a process of dehumanisation of 'irregular migrants' through the use of animalised metaphors was underway across European

countries, and this went hand in hand with a progressive loss of human rights for migrants (Vaughan-Williams 2015; see also Montali et al. 2013). According to Vaughan-Williams (2015), the phenomenon has been a direct consequence of the reinforcement of the European border control system and its subsequent management. This has in fact legitimated institutional powers by means of restrictive actions and resultant violence towards migrants at the border while restating the supremacy of some humans over others.

As an example of animalised metaphors, Montali et al. (2013) have reported that the Italian *Il Corriere della Sera* represented migrants as 'rats' when referring to the crowded conditions of their journeys across the Mediterranean. Lirola (2017), on the other hand, has reinforced the pattern by identifying that the sub-Saharan migrants attempting to climb the border fence in Melilla are frequently represented as "wild and dangerous" (p21).

To conclude, over recent years the representations of migrants in both Italian and Spanish news media have provided a mirror of political and institutional stances on migratory flows, without drawing the public's attention to the factual causes and dynamics of migration from Africa. News coverage of migrant border crossings has had the effect of feeding spreading anxieties over national security and cultural preservation whilst new social imaginaries involving migrants have been nourished. In the next and final section of this chapter, the main gaps that the current study aims to bridge will be identified. It will also highlight the main areas of research on which the analysis of news narratives will focus in the following chapters.

3.0 Methodology

A three-layer analysis for online news

This chapter develops both the theoretical and empirical approaches which were employed in the analysis of news narratives about the migrant crossings of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain border in Italian and Spanish online news media, from September 2013 to August 2015. Based on a structured range of semiotic-informed methods, the methodology proposed here includes narrative analysis of written and visual news texts and interviews with journalists. The main aims of its application were: exploring how migrants 'at the border' were portrayed in news texts, images, and videos and how news narratives about migrant border crossings were constructed over time; observing the narrative construction of power relations between the actors involved in the news; and highlighting differences in migration-telling between traditional newspapers' online versions and digital-born news media in Italy and Spain.

While exploring what representations of migrants and migrant border crossings the news conveyed, the set of methods employed here identified meanings and cultural values in the news and tracked narrative changes and novelties which, as underlined by Zelizer (1997) and Toolan (2000), are likely to occur in the dissemination of similar news articles over time. Indeed, as Flyvbjerg (2001) has pointed out, the very act of asking 'how' something has

occurred requires a narrative approach, since only this can reveal the meanings around which stories are constructed.

Starting from these remarks, the design of the current methodology drew on Roland Barthes' works in semiotics (1977; 1994; 2000; 2003). Barthes used to intertwine different levels of interpretation, such as textual, visual, and contextual, and cross-refer each of them. According to Eco (1994), the complexity of this analytical process indeed proved the accuracy of Barthes' interpretation, which was directed by the recognition of meanings across textual levels and supported by the exclusion of the interpretations which did not belong to them.

Within this framework, Barthes did not aim to structure analytical models for the interpretation of reality. Rather, through sophisticated analyses of textual and visual representations, he intended to demonstrate that every cultural expression within society is the result of uninterrupted processes of signification throughout time (Eco 1994). Barthes (2000) pointed out that the meanings which are embedded in texts, whether they are written or visual, as well as in the relationships between them always reveal an 'ideological abuse' (p11), in which historical contexts are omitted and reality is represented as 'natural', not as a result of factual intentions.

From this perspective and in order to discuss the historical 'fabrication' of meanings, Barthes (2000) suggested that any text was analysed through a narrative approach. In the case of visual representations, he proposed that the elements of news pictures, for instance, were 'read' and contextualised within their own narrative structure as a visual representation of events. Only

afterwards could an interpretation be expressed (Barthes 2000) and, even so, such an interpretation did not aim to hold reality in a sort of fixity. In fact, according to Eco (1994), through his interpretations Barthes intended to demonstrate that all that surrounds us is meaningful as it is made of varied and multiple qualities, which have historical and cultural connotations.

Such a semiotic approach was considered consistent with the purposes of the current study. However, Barthes, no matter how elegant his writing, did not provide a structured and repeatable methodology and his work mainly described his own interpretation of the objects of analysis (Eco 1994; Rose 2001; Van Leeuwen 2001; Ownby 2013). To address this shortcoming, a set of concepts and methods were identified in order to design a systematic approach for the analysis of online news that avoided the risk of an over-interpretation. Later, a number of semiotic-informed methods were organised in a three-layer analysis, which will be detailed in the next section. Finally, interviews with Italian and Spanish journalists were arranged from April to August 2016 as a complementary method of analysis; their analytical framework will be presented in this chapter as well.

Although the selection of the online news media considered in this study and the process of data gathering will both be clarified in a final section of this chapter, it is worth mentioning here that the analysis of news items, as well as interview questions, focused on the period of time from 1st September 2013 to 31st August 2015. News narratives about migrant border crossings were explored in particular from the shipwreck that occurred near the Italian island of Lampedusa on 3rd October 2013, which, at that time, was considered the

deadliest in the history of migration from Africa, up to a few days before the body of a Syrian boy was found on a Turkish shore, in September 2015. This selection is explained by the fact that this latter news event interrupted the long-lasting news narrative of similar occurrences that this study intended to analyse.

Moreover, the representation of migrants as well as the journalistic communication about migration underwent a sudden change after September 2015, due to the strong effect that the circulation of the pictures portraying Aylan's young body had on public opinion (de-Andrés et al. 2016). In order to have a consistent time frame, it was thus necessary to exclude this news event as well as the news narratives that sprang from it in the following months.

As a pilot study, the methodology that will be discussed in the next sections constitutes an attempt to investigate Italian and Spanish news narratives about migrant border crossings and to unfold the meanings associated with the representation of migrants. Ultimately, the analytical approach proposed here aims to understand what meanings were embedded in online news and how they were expressed through the written and visual elements of news narratives.

3.1 The three-layer analysis

As shown in the Literature Review, the notion of border is an epistemological device (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) through which different perspectives can be explored at a social, political, and symbolic level. What happens at the borders, which should not be considered just as lines or walls

between countries, highlights the practices of managing and controlling both social identities and cultural values. Indeed, due to the frequent reporting of migrant border crossings towards Italy and Spain, borders have progressively assumed a particular relevance in the broader narrative about migration from Africa to Europe. At the same time, they have become the geographical as well as ideological spaces in relation to which migrants are represented.

Within this framework, the current methodology was designed to investigate the meanings implied in online news about migrant border crossings and to identify the ideological abuse, 'what-goes-without-saying' (Barthes 2000, p11), that underlies the representation of migrants 'at the border'. In order not to limit the analysis, the approach proposed here avoids the use of predetermined categories and taxonomies, as suggested by authors such as Prince (1982), Bal (2009), and Bateman (2014). Therefore, it does not engage with framing analysis either, since this aims to identify dominant ideologies within society by organising common beliefs and ideas in structured and virtually fixed analytical frameworks (Hertog and McLeod 2001; Durham 2001). Barthes' work has in fact demonstrated that, in Blomaert's (2005) words, "ideology is *layered*, stratified, something that has varying dimensions and scopes of operation as well as varying degrees of accessibility to consciousness and agency" (p160 – emphasis in original) and it is to embrace this viewpoint on the complexity of reality as well as the production of meanings that the current methodology has been designed.

Similarly, the analysis of news narratives about migrant border crossings will not employ neither content nor collocation analysis, as proposed by Bell

(2001) and Perrin and Petry (2003), respectively. In the first case, in fact, the definition of explicit hypotheses of investigation would have been necessary; in the second, 'interestingness' of textual patterns should have been implied, thus requiring the definition of pre-determined assumptions about both the structure and content of news narratives.

In this regard, it would be rather more congruent here to adopt the approach to texts that critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995; Wodak 2006) recommends, but its specific analytical focus on language features and grammar, even at a micro-level of inspection, does not fit the semiotic approach that the methods here intend to develop. Nevertheless, as will be shown later in this chapter, the main goal of CDA's approaches such as transitivity analysis (Li 2010; Seo 2013; Machin and Mayr 2013) may resemble the aim which is at the core of the design of the current methodology: to reveal the power relations between the actors acting 'at the border' as well as the processes of meaning-making through which migrants are represented in news narratives.

As a means to carry out such an investigation, the analysis of news items will focus on four main themes: the portrayal of migrants; the representation of migrant border crossings; the description of the Italian and Spanish contexts at the border; and the role of the European Union within them. As will be detailed in the next sections, for the analysis of online news articles, a structured range of methods or techniques was organised in three layers, through which the production of meanings was explored according to three possible, different ways of consuming online news. They are: the reading of online news as a visual product; the conventional reading of news articles and video watching;

and the reading of the hyperlink content to which primary news articles were linked. In order to arrange data logically, for each of these three layers of analysis, a table was designed – the three tables are reproduced in the corresponding sections.

3.1.1 *The first layer: visual reading of online news*

Before being content, online news is primarily a visual product, which is framed by the browser's window and composed of elements including headlines, standfirsts, news text, images and videos (see also Baldry and Thibault 2006). Moreover, the relationship between text and image sheds light on meanings that may not be explicit neither in the written nor in the visual elements of the news (Barthes 1977; 1994; 2000; Bateman 2014; Mirzoeff 2011a). From this perspective, the design of the first layer of analysis is intended to expose not only the ideological and cultural meanings that emerged from the text-image relationship but also the ways through which they were expressed in the Italian and Spanish news reporting of migrant border crossings.

Overall, the first layer of analysis explores the content of the news headlines and standfirsts as well as the images, photogalleries, and video first-frames which are included in news articles. As an in-depth observation of online news content, this layer of analysis is fundamentally interpretative. Nevertheless, it provides specific methodological tools, which are based on a comprehensive and structured theoretical framework. Before detailing these

tools, it is worth remarking here that they were employed in a multimodal context. According to Baldry and Thibault (2006):

“The term *multimodality* does not designate a pregiven entity or text-type. Rather, it is a diversity of meaning-making activities that are undergoing rapid change in the contemporary cultural context” (pXV – emphasis in original).

Multimodality, hence, concerns the ways in which different semiotic systems produce meanings by means of their combination. As Bateman (2014) has observed:

“Under the right conditions, the value of a combination of different modes of meaning can be worth *more* than the information (...) that we get from the modes when used alone. In other words, text 'multiplied by' images is more than text simply occurring with or alongside images” (p6 – emphasis in original).

From a practical viewpoint, the first layer of analysis was performed in accordance with Table 1 (see page 104), which was designed to organise the theoretical tools that will be presented here in three consecutive subsections. However, it is worth considering that filling Table 1 with observations and extracts from news articles made the analysis problematic, due to the unforeseeable expansion of the table and the consequent lack of organisation of its content. To resolve this issue, data were collected in individual Word files, one for each news event. Subsequently, the data from all the news items about the same event were grouped in other Word files, which were organised by event dates, and divided into sections referring to individual online news media

and according to the three layers of analysis. These latter Word files, which can reach ten pages in length, constituted the framework by which data about the same news event were then compared.

The next two subsections will explore the methodological tools and concepts on which the analysis of headlines, standfirsts, and visual materials was based. In a third and conclusive subsection, the relevance of the analysis of the text-image relationship, which provides a 'holistic interpretation' (Bateman 2014) of online news, will be discussed.

3.1.1.1 *Headlines and standfirsts*

The literature about the functions of headlines (Perfetti et al. 1987; Kronrod and Engel 2001; Dor 2003; Ifantidou 2008, among others) has demonstrated that these news elements work as summaries of news content as well as thoughtful texts boosting readers' comprehension of the news. To the current methodology, however, it was the main concept underlying such an academic debate that was particularly relevant: news headlines appeal to the mental representations which both readers and journalists share as members of the same culture (see also Dor 2003; Ifantidou 2008; Cotter 2010). Moreover, while scanning news headlines, readers automatically recall previous knowledge and assumptions to both optimise the reading and build new frameworks for the overall comprehension of the news. As Ifantidou (2008) has remarked:

“Precisely because headlines consistently underrepresent, or overrepresent, and hence misrepresent, news stories, readers’ previous knowledge and sophisticated reading strategies are claimed to be critical in retrieving the explicit or implicit meaning conveyed” (p700).

Building upon these premises, the assumptions expressed in the content of headings and standfirsts offered a starting point for the recognition of meanings in the news. In particular, the analysis of headlines and standfirsts here explored the main themes of interest for this study: the representation of migrants and their crossings of borders and the description of the Italian and Spanish contexts at the border, within which the role of the European Union was also examined. In order to validate the qualitative approach and tackle the possible emergence of interpretative problems, some guidelines were set up at an initial stage of analysis. From a theoretical perspective, in fact, there was a need for conceptual tools which ensured the reliability of interpretation.

To begin with, the notions of ‘explicit’ and ‘presupposed information’ were borrowed from Prince’s (1982) narratology in order to identify ideological meanings in both headlines and standfirsts. Explicit information is what is stated clearly and it does not prompt particular issues of interpretation. The concept of presupposed information, instead, is more complex and may be equivocal to some extent. Contrary to implicit information, which is information that is not stated at all, presuppositions are what “is stated, though not directly” (Prince 1982, p40) and constitute an inherent part of explicit information. According to Prince (1982): “When a narrator presupposes something, he (...) puts himself in the position of someone whose audience knows (or could know) that which is

presupposed” (p42). Presuppositions, therefore, are what allows the narrator “to impose a certain universe of discourse” (Prince 1982, p44) by asserting the 'irrefutable' premises of the narration. In Prince's (1982) words:

“The study of presupposition can thus help illuminate the manipulation of point of view, the control of distance, the nature of justifications and motivations. Indeed, given any narrative, the study of which information is (given as) old or shared and which is (given as) new and unshared can lead to a firmer and deeper comprehension of its functioning” (p46-7).

Since “for at least many, perhaps all, of the thoughts we seek to communicate, full explicitness is not possible” (Carston 2009, p59), the search for presupposed information in journalistic communication can produce fruitful interpretations of cultural meanings. From this perspective, the first layer of analysis focused on explicit as well as presupposed information in headlines and standfirsts in order to highlight the 'dialogical move' (Macagno 2012, p245) that news narratives about migrant border crossings might have had across consecutive news articles throughout time. Indeed, through the lens of frequent and similar news reporting, the analysis of presuppositions enabled the observation of a chain of embedded news meanings which were linked one to another within a long-lasting narrative. Furthermore, the meanings that emerged from this first layer were cross-referred to the findings which were revealed by the other two layers of analysis as well as by the interviews which were arranged with journalists.

3.1.1.2 *Pictures, photogalleries, and video first-frames*

If headlines and standfirsts lead readers to understand the news in line with previous information and common assumptions, images bring them a step further. As 'intelligible representations' of news (Hall 1981, p234), pictures permit the public to 'uncritically think' about the news, since they make readers believe that they know what images actually represent (Morris 2014, p92). However, pictures are not simply a matter of seeing: they express culture visually and therefore embrace the same meanings and values that can be conveyed by written texts (Mirzoeff 2011a; 2011b), no matter what type of vehicle they take for their dissemination. Nowadays, for instance, it is the abundance of monitors through which readers can access visual materials that spreads meanings and this has led on to a process of 'screenisation'⁵ of culture (Brisset 2011, p38) where, from a semiotic perspective, images and texts are equivalent in terms of meaningfulness. In Mirzoeff's (1998) words: "Visual culture does not depend on pictures but on this modern tendency to picture or visualize existence" (p6).

By drawing from Barthes' work, Hall (1981) had already demonstrated the role of news pictures in the production of culture. Such images, in fact, interpret events more than describing them and are therefore rich in symbolic values and connoted meanings. More recently, Messaris and Abraham (2001) have observed that the very news production of images is largely ideological. Since images seem to be closer to reality than words due to their 'natural'

⁵ The word here is the translation of a neologism in Spanish language, *pantallización*, which Brisset (2011) has employed with reference to the large availability of monitors and screens through which reality is consumed in advanced societies nowadays.

analogy with the events that they represent, as agreed by different scholars (Hall 1981; Messaris and Abraham 2001; Coleman 2010; Fahmy 2010; Fahmy and Neuman 2012), they can even convey meanings that audiences may disapprove if encountered, for instance, in a written text (Messaris and Abraham 2001). In other words, as Messaris and Abraham (2001) have pointed out, the power of images lies in “the viewer's ability to make intuitive sense of implicit meanings” (p219).

In line with this perspective, the first layer of analysis deals with the visual elements of the news by employing the notions of ‘explicit information’ and ‘implicitness’, which recall the concepts of explicit and presupposed information discussed for the analysis of headlines and standfirsts. Here, however, the notion of implicitness refers to Barthes’ (1977) idea that images contain more meanings than those that can be perceived at once while looking at an image. The relevance of this idea will be demonstrated in the next section, where the anchorage (Barthes 1977) between written text and images will be discussed as an important methodological tool for the analytical approach proposed here.

To sum up, the notions of explicit and presupposed/implicit information were identified as the internal properties pertaining to headlines and standfirsts as well as news images. As a result, the first layer of analysis addressed the analysis of diverse semiotic modes such as news text and images through a comprehensive and holistic interpretation of the internal properties of online news. In the next and final subsection, how the relationship between news text and visuals was analysed will be discussed. Through the observation of

meaning-making processes that the analysis of such a relationship made clearer, the 'communicative act' (Bateman 2014, p28) in news narratives about migrant border crossings was finally illuminated.

3.1.1.3 *The text-image relationship*

Although headlines, standfirsts, and images belong to heterogeneous semiotic systems, they can be explored within a common analytical framework through Barthes' (1977) concept of 'anchorage'. According to Barthes (1977), images are deeply 'polysemous' (p39), which means that not all their meanings can be understood at once. Nevertheless, by anchoring some of their meanings to those emerging from the written text, their interpretation can be delimited and controlled. In the first layer of analysis, therefore, the notion of anchorage was employed as the common ground in which the text-image relationship could be explored. Within such a delimited context, in fact, it was possible to identify and select a 'particular denotation' of news pictures among all the possible interpretations (Bateman 2014, p34).

The anchorage between news text and image was crucial to determine what meanings the online news articles conveyed. By means of such a relationship, the cultural values which produce "recognition of the world" (Hall 1981, p239) and make the news intelligible to the public could be highlighted. In order to show how the visual reading of online news items was organised and performed in the first layer of analysis, Table 1 (below) was designed. In it, the category of 'novelty' for the analysis of news narratives from January 2014 to

August 2015 was also inserted. Through this particular class of analysis, narrative elements such as words, concepts, written and visual meanings, and also news sources, which were not being observed in the news articles referring to the previous months, from September to December 2013, could be tracked.

Table 1. Structure of the first layer of analysis

1° Layer of analysis		Headline	Standfirst	Image/s (video first-frame included)	Text-image relationship	
					Anchorage	Interpretation
Explicit information	Theme* 1					
	Theme 2					
	Theme 3					
	Theme 4					
Presuppositions/ Implicitness	Theme 1					
	Theme 2					
	Theme 3					
	Theme 4					
Novelty (after 01.01.14)	Theme 1					
	Theme 2					
	Theme 3					
	Theme 4					

*The four themes are, as follows: 1) portrayal of migrants; 2) representation of migrant border crossing; 3) description of the Italian and Spanish contexts at the border; 4) role of the European Union within the Italian and Spanish contexts.

By analysing news items according to the classes of information that the first layer of analysis gathers, as represented by Table 1, it was possible to interpret the reading of online news about migrant border crossings in terms of a visual news product. Indeed, the analytical categories which are employed here should not be understood as ‘codes’, which in framing analysis would define reality. Rather, they constitute the tools that allowed the analysis to bring to light the chain of meanings which were expressed within online news.

It is worth highlighting here, then, that all the news items analysed in this study concerned a single news story, the migrant crossings of borders, and their analysis referred to a precise context, whose definition is of primary importance when searching for meanings (Barthes 2000). Nevertheless, such a context was not considered as static and fixed; rather, by means of the methodological tools through which its representation was analysed, it appeared to be always *in fieri*, continuously depending on the circumstances and features of its depiction. This approach is substantially different from that of framing analysis, where the crossing of borders by migrants would be considered as structured framework for the investigation of ideology.

Finally, the first layer of analysis (Table 1) was also useful to compare the narrative choices of the Italian and Spanish online news media considered in this study. Indeed, the distinct structures of the online news media's narratives reflected the differences between national cultural values as well as specific journalistic practices. In the next section, the second layer of analysis will be presented, as well as how the investigation of online news about migrant border crossings proceeded through the narrative analysis of news texts and video audio.

3.1.2 *The second layer: narrative analysis of news texts and video audio*

This section provides both the conceptual and practical tools which were employed in the analysis of the narratives of online news articles. However, as a broad range of theoretical perspectives and techniques exists in narrative

research (Squire et al. 2008), the methodological choices adopted here need first to be justified.

To begin with, as already mentioned, the news about migrant border crossings was investigated as a single and long-lasting story, which has developed over time by means of the repetition of similar news events such as shipwrecks and rescues in the Mediterranean Sea and violations of human rights at the Morocco-Spain border. At a descriptive level, a 'story' is a chain of events which are connected one to another in chronological order and in which different actors interact (Toolan 2000, p4). At a deeper level of analysis, on the other hand, any story implies a narrative manipulation, which involves the way in which the events are told as well as how the storyteller makes sense of them (Toolan 2000, p5). There, while actors, through their actions, connect events within a broader narrative context, specific viewpoints on reality are expressed.

As shown in the Literature Review, the story considered in this study began with the Schengen Agreement in 1995 and has evolved alongside the implementation of entry requirements for migrants from Africa. The difficulty in obtaining visas, in fact, has driven migrants to choose dangerous routes across the Mediterranean and face violations of human rights at the Morocco-Spain border. However, beyond the description of such news events and the analysis of the representations of migrants, the cultural meanings which have been embedded in the news over time still need to be investigated adequately.

The design of the second layer of analysis, therefore, aimed to explore the narratives through which migration-related meanings were shaped and established from September 2013 to August 2015. The analysis targeted the

actors of the migration story – migrants, the Italian and Spanish as well as the European Union representatives – whose representations were at the core of the first layer of analysis. This second layer focused instead on the reporting of these actors' behaviour at the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders in news texts and video audio, which, in terms of narrative content, are equivalent to a written text (Bertetti 2015). As a result, it emerged that the narration of their behaviour was what actually determined the flow of news narratives while providing the journalistic perspective on the events. Such news narratives, which were generally characterised by short texts with linear structures, concerned the dynamics between the actors involved in the news and highlighted how the events were articulated throughout time from the Italian and Spanish online news media's perspectives, with a comparative approach.

According to Barthes (1977), in order to identify the underlying meanings of a story, narratives should be divided into small narrative units, which should then be grouped in a limited number of analytical categories. At an initial stage of its design, therefore, the second layer of analysis borrowed from Barthes' (1977) narrative theory the concepts of 'function' and 'index', which are the two main classes of information into which narratives can be divided. In the strict sense, functions refer to the 'functionality of doing' and indices, which concern identities and feelings, refer to the 'functionality of being' (Barthes 1977, p93). Nevertheless, as Barthes (1977) stressed:

"Functions cannot be reduced to actions (verbs), nor indices to qualities (adjectives) (...) there are actions that are indicial, being 'signs' of a character, an atmosphere, etc." (p93).

Unfortunately, Barthes (1977) did not explain how to employ functions and indices in narrative analysis. Although he remarked that they could be words and sentences as well as groups of sentences and minor grammatical elements, overall he did not develop a structured analytical approach to narrative. Therefore, to enable the second layer of analysis to produce consistent interpretations, the notions of 'ideation' and 'identification' which were described by Martin and Rose (2005) for the purposes of discourse analysis were substituted for function and index. The two authors have described these concepts, as follows:

"Ideation focuses on the 'content' of a discourse: what kinds of activities are undertaken, and how participants in these activities are described, how they are classified and what they are composed of. Ideation is concerned with how our experience of 'reality', material and symbolic, is construed in discourse" (Martin and Rose 2005, p66).

"Identification is concerned with tracking participants: with introducing people and things into a discourse and keeping track of them once there. There are textual resources, concerned with how discourse makes sense to the reader, by keeping track of identities" (Martin and Rose 2005, p145).

The concept of ideation, which originally referred to the narrative construction of personal experiences in verbal communication, is at the core of the "wh-items" through which discourse can be analysed – they are: when, where, what about, who with, what as/how involved (Martin and Rose 2005, p70). For the analysis of news narrative in this second layer of analysis, four of

these five “wh-items” demonstrated themselves to be fertile methodological tools. One of them, 'when', as a reference to time, was excluded, as news stories about migrant border crossings, which were gathered by date, narrated brief events in quite a linear manner. Furthermore, the concept of identification, which was originally employed in linguistics to analyse English texts, made it possible to logically organise the small narrative units referring to the four main actors considered here, whom the “wh-items” had allowed us to distinguish. Identification was also a useful tool to track definitions and representations as well as their possible changes throughout time.

Similar to what occurs in the case of transitivity analysis, where processes and dynamics between actors are identified at a linguistic and visual level (Seo 2013; Machin and Mayr 2013), the current approach to online news content intended to reveal the power relations which dominated the flow of narratives. This slant may resonate with Fairclough's (1995) statements about the aims of critical discourse analysis. However, the CDA's focus on the ideological features of texts is absent in the methodological approach proposed here, which nevertheless strives to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics existing between different actors in the news.

From this perspective, and building upon both Barthes' (1977) and Martin's and Rose's (2005) narrative theories, the second layer of analysis was thus organised around a set of narrative attributes which referred to functional aspects of the content of news texts, video and audio. By then cross-referring the data to the findings emerging from the first layer, the overall interpretation could be justified and strengthened.

In order to perform this second layer of analysis systematically, Table 2 (below) was designed. Here, the news actors whose behaviour was investigated and the analytical tools which were employed in the analysis are listed. It is worth observing that, in the table, 'what about' refers to the circumstances of migrant border crossings while 'who with' is extended, as 'who/what with', since it was possible that actors' actions might be conducted through particular means such as helicopters, for instance when the Italian and Spanish police forces as news actors were considered.

Table 2. Structure of the second layer of analysis

2° Layer of analysis	What about/ circumstances	How involved	Who/what with	Where	Identification/ definitions
Migrants					
Italy/Spain					
European Union					

This second table stresses once more how the current methodology was not based on predetermined hypotheses. Its main purpose, in fact, was to answer the research questions without applying a predefined coding instrument (Van Gorp 2010) or producing frames (Durham 2001; Messaris and Abraham 2001). Since the cultural meanings that are shared between journalists and readers are generally taken for granted by both, the use of frames would have only reiterated them without critically engaging with and understanding them. Indeed, from this perspective, Durham (2001) has observed that:

“Framing creates the illusion of a comprehensive history by limiting the universe of possible social meanings contained in each previous frame and, therefore, by limiting how they can be included in subsequent histories. (...) social narratives both precede and follow frame formation [but] their meanings are only socially potent *prior* to the definition of a news frame. Afterwards, they have been rendered invisible by framing” (p130 – emphasis in original).

Finally, the current methodological approach to online news proposes, in the next section, a third and final layer of analysis, whose aim is to explore whether and how news narratives about migrant border crossings were expanded through hyperlink content.

3.1.3 *The third layer: intertextual analysis of news content*

If the first two layers of analysis aim to identify the meanings which might have shaped readers' understanding of migrant border crossings, the third layer intends to highlight what aspects of news reporting readers could have developed further by engaging with hyperlink content. At this stage, the intertextual analysis that has been designed by Boje (2001) constituted an additional theoretical device through which Italian and Spanish news narratives were compared.

Although it represents an under-researched area of study, intertextual analysis can be particularly useful to shed light on the broader narratives underlying online news. According to Boje (2001), in fact, the complex and dynamic process of sense-making which conveys both 'common sense' and ideologies can be identified within any text. From this perspective, “each text is

theorized as a network of fragments that refer to still other narrative texts” (Boje 2001, p74) and that can be investigated by considering, for instance, the function of internal quotes and references as well as sources of information.

Overall, intertextual analysis has been developed in line with three main foci, which Boje (2001) has defined as follows: production, which aims to identify the sources of the discourse within the text; distribution, which looks at the textual releases that, from the past onwards up to the current text, are anchored one to another in an apparently 'never-ending chain'; and consumption, which, from an historical viewpoint, refers to the ways in which readers consume texts.

For the aims of this research, however, only the intertextual analysis of production was of interest, as it justified the investigation of the sources of information that were available in the news items as well as the news articles' narrative units that were proposed further through hyperlink content. As will be explained later, how news sources were sought and employed in online news production was also one of the topics that were discussed during the research interviews with journalists. Overall, the third layer of analysis was designed to highlight how news narratives were being sourced. The analysis looked at the sources which were reported in news articles as well as hyperlink content in terms of narrative elements construing deeper levels of meaning (Sancha 2005; Bednarek and Caple 2012a; Doherty 2014; De Maeyer 2014; De Maeyer and Le Cam 2015).

In practice, the text of each news item was copied and pasted in to individual Word files, where news sources were highlighted. Then, hyperlinks,

together with a brief description of the referring secondary news items, were inserted in Table 3 (below), in connection with the four themes of interest of this study. Finally, hyperlink content was explored by means of the first layer of analysis. It is worth observing that the investigation of hyperlinks generated a large amount of secondary news items and the analysis of standfirsts and their relationship with images was thus excluded in order to handle such a volume of data. The analysis of headlines and their relationship with images was instead regularly reported in the Word files created for the comparison of the primary news items. This final stage of analysis provided a comprehensive, although complex, framework for the study of news narratives about migrant border crossings.

Table 3. Structure of the third layer of analysis

3° Layer of analysis	Hyperlinks →	1° Layer of analysis	
		Anchorage	Interpretation
Theme 1	→		
Theme 2	→		
Theme 3	→		
Theme 4	→		

To sum up, this third layer of analysis focused on both news sources and the elements of news narratives that were reproduced through hyperlinks. This approach was particularly useful to identify what news sources were acknowledged in the news throughout time and to shed light on the discursive continuity of news narratives across different texts (Carlson and Franklin 2011; Carlson 2011; De Maeyer 2014; De Maeyer and Le Cam 2015). Within this framework, the differences between Italian and Spanish online news media's

narratives could also be compared further. The following section will discuss interviews with journalists as a complementary method for the analysis of news narratives and news production in Italian and Spanish online news media.

3.2 Interviews as a complementary method of analysis

The design of the three-layer analysis proposed here demonstrates a high level of attention to the processes of online news production. This was also reflected in the planning of semi-structured interviews with Italian and Spanish journalists. Through them and by means of a set of 'sufficiently open' questions (Wengraf 2001; Shuy 2001), journalistic practices and working routines in the coverage of news about migrant border crossings were scrutinised. In particular, interview questions concerned the use of official and non-elite sources, the selection of news images, videos, and hyperlink content and the role of journalists in the reporting of migration-related issues.

It is worth pointing out here that in the current study online news articles were investigated as what actually narrated the events. The interviews with journalists, on the other hand, aimed to understand how online news was produced through professional practices and individual expertise (see also Schudson 2005). In the reporting of migration, journalists tend to organise their working routines around a variety of news sources such as political and economic institutions and civil society's organisations, each of them providing different meanings about the migrant crossings of borders. More than creating a narrative, therefore, they reflect shared meanings as well as cultural and

societal values in the news articles that they produce. In Manoff's and Schudson's (1986) words:

“News is more important and journalists less important than is popularly recognized. Journalists are less important not because they simply transmit, mirrorlike, the real world to readers – far from it – but because they refract the views of reality held by powerful news sources” (p7-8).

In sum, the news entails the 'ideological atmosphere' within society that journalists convey (Schudson 2005). The interviews with journalists which were planned for research purposes also aimed to investigate the role that news sources and news agencies play in news production. As news agencies can even be seen as the real producers of news (Czarniawska 2012; Bennett et al. 2013), it was important to define the boundaries within which news sources could actually shape news narratives about migrant border crossings.

As the coverage of the migrant crossings of the Libya-Italy border demonstrates, the objective difficulties of reaching the places where events occur makes news media strongly reliant on news agencies' releases and institutional source materials. From this perspective, one of the research purposes was to determine whether news narratives in traditional news media's online versions and digital-born news media were distinct and, if so, how. The two types of news media, in fact, may have selected and related to news sources differently, in order to provide specific viewpoints (see also Pascual 2016).

In addition, how the 'speed of work', which has become particularly demanding in online journalism (Paterson 2008; Quandt 2008), can affect news production and make it dependent on outsourced materials (Quandt 2008; Bennett et al. 2013) was taken into consideration. As Quandt (2008) has observed, in fact:

“Online journalists devote most of their time to selecting and editing news agency wire stories; they do little original reporting and engage in few technical tasks” (p77).

As a result, the interviews with journalists which were arranged from April to August 2016 were useful to explore the contemporary journalistic practices that entail news production. For each of the four traditional news media selected for this study – *repubblica.it*, *corriere.it*, *elpais.com*, and *elmundo.es* – two journalists were interviewed. However, in the case of the digital-born news media, due to the unavailability of journalists, especially at *fanpage.it* and *eldiario.es*, only one interview for the Italian *lettera43.it* and one for the Spanish *infolibre.es* were done. How the eight news media were selected for research purposes in the first place will be discussed in the next section.

Without compromising the anonymity of the journalists who were contacted for research purposes, as guaranteed by the 'Consent form' that the interviewer and all the interviewees signed before proceeding to interviews, it can be said here that three out of the four Italian journalists participating this research were senior journalists, identifying themselves as 'press journalists'. Nowadays working for both the online and press version of their corresponding

newspapers, these interviewees have a solid professional background in journalism as national and foreign correspondents. The fourth of them, who referred to himself/herself as an experienced journalist “who works outside the newsroom, thus in the field (*che lavora al di fuori della redazione, e che quindi sta sul campo*), will be mentioned as an ‘investigative journalist’ in the section of the Data Analysis concerning the interviews with journalists.

Finally, the fifth Italian journalist interviewed here used to work at *lettera43.it*. As also clarified by the interview itself, reported in the Data Analysis, this was the less ‘expert’ among the five Italian journalists, as he/she started working within a digital newsroom only in 2010 and without previous substantial experiences as a professional.

In the case of the Spanish journalists, on the other hand, all the five journalists who were interviewed, including the one working at *infolibre.es*, hold a comparable long-lasting professional knowledge of both national and foreign news reporting. They can be considered ‘press journalists’, although they also work in the online environment, as well as the three Italian journalists above mentioned do.

At the time of planning the research interviews, a list of potential interviewees was drafted on the basis of the news items that would further be analysed. The names of the journalists were selected among those of the news articles’ authors and their expertise searched on the news media websites. However, most of the news items selected for this study were signed with the name of the newspaper (‘The newsroom’, *La redazione*, in Italian); or, individual

authors' names belonged to foreign correspondents or freelancer, who could not physically be reached during the periods of research work in Italy and Spain.

Since interviews were meant to be arranged in person, the Italian journalists who were finally chosen, therefore, were among the professionals participating at the 'International Journalism Festival' held in Perugia in April 2016, and according to their expertise on migration. The Spanish journalists, on the other hand, were chosen and contacted once in Spain thanks to the mediation of the Erasmus tutor, Dr Ignacio Blanco, and through their Twitter accounts – employed also for the first contact with the Italian journalists a few weeks before the Festival in Perugia started.

Once the interviews were arranged by means of messages via Twitter and then e-mails, information about the 'Content form' to be signed was communicated and the document then sent to the journalists. Later on, the interviews were conducted in the journalists' mother tongue – one of the Spanish journalists was Italian – and all recorded; they lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, according to individual availability.

According to Corbetta (2013), "each interview is unique" (p16) and can bring the research "beyond the original formulation of the problem" (p27). This was particularly true in the case of the two interviews with the journalists working in the digital-born news media, as they provided detailed descriptions of the respective organisations. In particular, they revealed that, due to their small size, the two news media outlets employed less than 15 journalists and had limited economic resources at their disposal. Furthermore, these two digital-born news media did not have correspondents covering foreign news and,

according to the two interviewees, the journalists working there lacked expertise in migration-related issues.

Since the two journalists did not have much to say in order to specifically address the research questions, they engaged in conversations and discussed journalistic practice in-depth from a broader perspective. As a result, these two conversational exchanges were so fruitful that they helped to problematise the work of journalists in online news media organisations beyond the original intentions of the current research (see also Goode and Hatt 1952).

Usually, the interviews were conducted in the newsrooms in which journalists worked or in public spaces such as cafes and hotel lobbies, apart from one interview, which was done via Skype. In this latter case, the interviewee was at home, without distractions, and the Internet connection was stable. Again in this case, therefore, it was possible to develop a genuine 'research partnership' with a good level of 'personal connection' (Seitz 2016; Lo lacono et al. 2016).

The research interviews intentionally avoided closed yes-no questions and selected topics which would allow journalists to reflect (see also Goode and Hatt 1952; Corbetta 2013; Pezalla and Pettigrew 2016), in particular, on possible changes in the reporting of migration from Africa from September 2013 to August 2015, when news coverage adapted to an increasing number of news events at the Italian and Spanish borders. At a further stage, the interviews were then transcribed into individual Word files and the role of pauses and silences in conversation were respected by avoiding strict punctuation. The transcriptions were also enriched by notes about off-record comments and

observations. Finally, the 10 interviews were analysed thematically, according to the main research foci and without employing conversation analysis procedures (Pezalla and Pettigrew 2016).

To sum up, journalists, who were chosen on the basis of their expertise and interest in migration-related issues and interviewed in their native language, shared rich information about their working practices. As a result, they helped create thoughtful conversations by engaging with the research topics and by stimulating new theoretical issues (Weiss 2004; Roulston 2010; Pezalla and Pettigrew 2016) which, eventually, led to the writing of a dedicated chapter, '*Journalistic performance and news production: challenges and contradictions*'.

3.3 Data gathering: online news media and news items

In order to demonstrate how online news narratives may be produced differently, two types of online news media in Italy and Spain were chosen and compared: traditional daily newspapers' online versions and digital-born news media. One of the aims of this study, in fact, is to explore whether or not the news narratives about migrant border crossings that these two types of news media adopted from September 2013 to August 2015 were different and, if so, what narrative elements made them distinctive. Hence, eight news media outlets, four for each country, were selected. For Italy, the two national newspapers' online versions considered were *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* and the two digital-born news media were *lettera43.it* and *fanpage.it*. For Spain, the corresponding couples of news media were constituted by *elpais.com* and

elmundo.es and *eldiario.es* and *infolibre.es*.

According to *alexa.com*, a provider of commercial web traffic data, the numbers of viewers of these online news media are quite different. The online versions of the four traditional newspapers coincide with the best-selling titles in both Italy and Spain and each of them has held a solid readership for more than three decades. On the other hand, the digital-born news media platforms considered here appeared online only after 2010 and it may thus be said that they are still strengthening their viewers' loyalty. Nevertheless, the websites of these four independent news media organisations are among the most viewed⁶ in both countries – the overall most-viewed news websites are those belonging to the four traditional daily newspapers.

Since this study intended to develop a diversified and in-depth analysis of news narratives in two different types of news media, beyond online traffic, the selection of the four digital-born news media was based on two qualitative criteria. Firstly, the news media outlets defined themselves as independent in their 'Who we are' web-page and clearly stated their professional standpoint in terms of social commitment to the public good. Secondly, they publish original news articles.

Once the eight news media organisations were selected, the process of data gathering was planned. The dates of the migrant attempts to cross the

⁶ After identifying the criteria for the selection of independent news websites, as described later on in the section, a few ranking websites such as *alexa.com*, *easycounter.com*, and *ojdinteractiva.es/medios-digitales* were used for their comparison. The four digital-born news media platforms that were finally selected for this study were among the most viewed independent news websites in Italy and Spain during the time frame considered here. Although their choice has not been arbitrary, it has not been based on rigorous statistical criteria.

Mediterranean Sea and the Morocco-Spain border were organised in the table 'The calendar of news events' (below), which provides a clear visualisation and a brief description of those events. In particular, its design was based on the reporting of five different sources, as follows:

1) The Migrant Files (TMF). The Migrants' Files team is a consortium of journalists from various countries that has built a reliable database on migrants' deaths at the EU's borders from 1st January 2000 to date, in collaboration with universities and a broad network of associations across Europe. This database, an Excel file, is available online under the Open Database License at <http://www.themigrantsfiles.com/>. It constituted the primary source for 'The calendar of news events'.

2) The UNITED List of Deaths (UloD). Similar to the document released by the Migrants' Files team, the UNITED List of Deaths was compiled by the UNITED for Intercultural Action network, in collaboration with NGOs, journalists, government organisations, and research institutes. This file covers the period of time from 1st January 1993 to 23rd April 2015 and can be downloaded at <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/>. In the website, it is reported that “there are potentially many more (fatalities) that remain undocumented and experts agree it is impossible to know the real death count”.

3) Migreurop (MIGRE). The Euro-African network *Migreurop*, funded in 2005, is a European borders observatory and is currently active. All the newsletters that it has released over time are available online (<http://www.migreurop.org>) and they were checked as a further source of information for the whole period of time considered in this study.

4) Fortress Europe blogspot (FE). Fortress Europe is the blog of an independent Italian journalist, who reported the occurrences at the EU's borders from 1st November 1988 to 2nd October 2014. The blog, which has been recently updated, is available at: <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/>.

5) Personal Twitter account (PT). The Twitter account @gilgasfrnd was used to store news about migrants and migrant border crossings on an occasional basis starting from 18th June 2014.

In the months for which no information has been entered in 'The calendar of news events', the five sources introduced above had reported news events referring to the death of migrants on the shores of Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt and, therefore, outside the framework of the current research. It is also worth mentioning here that the outline of this calendar of news events was integrated with major border management actions, which are reported in bold in the table.

The calendar of news events

Date	Border	News events according to sources	Number of deaths	Sources
September 2013				
9	Libya-Italy	One Syrian woman died during an eight-day voyage on a boat carrying 354 refugees	1	TMF
12	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	60	TMF
16/ 17	Morocco-Spain	Shipwreck in the waters of Ceuta – 1 found alive, <u>12 missing</u>	-	TMF, FE
29/3 0	Libya-Italy	Landing in Catania, migrants were forced to jump into the sea by traffickers	13	TMF, FE
October 2013				
1	Morocco-Spain	Shipwreck in Moroccan waters	8	TMF
2	Libya-Italy	A boat with about 180 people on board sank shortly after leaving Libya	90	TMF
2/3	Libya-Italy	A boat from Libya to Italy caught fire and sank – about 155 rescued	325/373	TMF/UloD, FE
11	Libya-Italy	A boat carrying more than 200 migrants capsized	27	TMF
18	The Italian Navy's operation <i>Mare Nostrum</i> begins			
November 2013				

5	Morocco-Spain	Massive attempt to cross the border in Melilla	-	FE
11	Morocco-Spain	Shipwreck	-	FE
December 2013 - January 2014				
February 2014				
6	Morocco-Spain	Spanish/Moroccan police shot migrants swimming to Ceuta with rubber bullets	17/13/15	UloD/TMF/FE
13	Morocco-Spain	Police-migrant riots in Ceuta	14	FE
March 2014 - April 2014				
10	Libya-Italy	1600 migrants rescued near Sicily	-	FE
29/30	Libya-Italy	Boat sank just off Libyan coast – 1 survivor	40	TMF, UloD
May 2014				
1	Libya-Italy	The Libyan coastguard reported that it had saved 80 people from a sinking vessel	4	TMF
2	Libya-Italy	After a boat started leaking 5 km off the Libyan coast, 80 were rescued by coastguard	4	UloD
3	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck – more than 200 on board, <u>42 missing</u>	36	TMF
6	Libya-Italy	A boat carrying 130 migrants sank off the Libyan coast on way to Italy – 53 survivors	36/33	TMF/UloD
7	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck – 300 migrants rescued	1	FE
11	Libya-Italy	A boat sank around 37 miles east off Tripoli – 51 rescued	40	TMF, UloD, FE
12	Libya-Italy	A boat with some 400 migrants sank off Libyan coast – 206 rescued, <u>177 missing</u>	17	TMF, UloD, FE
25/26	Morocco-Spain	The boat capsizes while trying to reach Spain – <u>1 missing</u>	2	TMF, FE
28	Morocco-Spain	Shipwreck near Tangier, Morocco – <u>1 missing</u>	2	FE
June 2014				
7	Libya-Italy	Migrants died, as they fell from rope ladder during a rescue attempt	4	UloD
9	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	3	FE, PT
10	Libya-Italy	Four migrants fell from rope ladder during a rescue attempt – <u>4 missing</u>	-	TMF
13	Morocco-Spain	Shipwreck	-	FE
13	Libya-Italy	The Italian Navy rescued 39 migrants aboard an inflatable boat – <u>95 missing</u>	10	TMF
14	Libya-Italy	A boat containing the bodies of about 30 migrants was being towed by the Italian Navy	30/10	TMF/FE
20	Morocco-Spain	Moroccan police hit migrants at the Melilla border	-	PT
27	Morocco-Spain	A boat sank – <u>9 missing</u>	2	TMF
28	Libya-Italy	45 corpses were discovered during the rescue operation of a boat with 600 migrants	45	TMF, UloD
29	Libya-Italy	25 migrants were locked up in a cold store by traffickers – 550 migrants rescued	13	TMF, PT
30	Libya-Italy	30 corpses were discovered during rescue operations	30	FE, PT
July 2014				
1	Morocco-Spain	Mass attempt to cross the Melilla border	-	PT
1/2	Libya-Italy	Overcrowded boat capsized off Sicily – 27 migrants rescued	74	TMF, UloD, PT
2	Libya-Italy	45 corpses were discovered during the rescue operation of a boat	45	TMF

		with 600 migrants		
5/6	Libya-Italy	A boat capsized off the coast of Tripoli – <u>200 missing</u>	12	TMF, UIoD
11	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	12	PT
11	Morocco-Spain	38 <i>pateras</i> reach Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar	-	PT
14/ 16	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck. Libya's Navy retrieved the bodies of three migrants – 100 were rescued	3	TMF
16	Libya-Italy	A boat was intercepted as it sank by a merchant vessel	41	TMF
18	Libya-Italy	19 migrants were found to be killed by toxic fumes from the boat's engine	19	TMF, PT
19	Libya-Italy	Migrants were stabbed or thrown overboard from over-crowded vessel – 750 involved	181	TMF, UIoD, FE
20	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck – 400 migrants involved	30	FE
21	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	5	FE, PT
24	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	170	PT
28	Libya-Italy	A makeshift boat sank off the Libyan coast – 22 migrants were rescued, <u>108 missing</u>	20	TMF
30	Libya-Italy	A boat sank off Libya's coast – 24 migrants survived	150	TMF, FE
August 2014				
2	Libya-Italy	The Italian Navy reported about two bodies recovered on its Twitter feed, without details	2	TMF
13	Morocco-Spain	Migrant beaten to death by Spanish Civil Guard when trying to force a way in Melilla	1	UIoD
22	Libya-Italy	A boat capsized just off Garibouli – 19 survived	270/251	TMF/UIoD
23	Libya-Italy	Boat in distress, migrants probably died from starvation – 73 survived	18/28	TMF/UIoD
24	Libya-Italy	A fishing boat carrying 400 migrants capsized off the Libyan coast due to bad weather	24/36/18	TMF/UIoD/ FE
24	Libya-Italy	18 corpses found on an inflatable dinghy floating south of Lampedusa – 73 rescued	18	TMF
29	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	41	TMF
30	Morocco-Spain	Migrant died when trying to climb the border fence in Melilla	1	UIoD
31	Libya-Italy	A rubber dinghy capsized shortly after leaving Libya – no survivors	115/105	TMF/UIoD
September 2014				
6	Morocco-Spain	Massive attempts to cross the border in Melilla	2	FE
10	Libya-Italy	A boat capsized off the coast of Libya – 36 migrants were rescued	160	TMF
10	Libya-Italy	Traffickers deliberately sank boat carrying 500 migrants	500/487	FE/UIoD
14/ 15	Libya-Italy	A boat carrying 250 sank – 36 migrants were rescued	231/214/250	TMF/UIoD/ MIGRE
19	Libya-Italy	Series of shipwrecks	850 (sum)	MIGRE
22	Libya-Italy	An overcrowded boat sank – <u>35 missing</u>	10	TMF
29	Morocco-Spain	Police-migrant riots in Melilla	-	MIGRE
29	Libya-Italy	Two boats carrying migrants to Europe capsize near Tripoli	70	TMF
October 2014				
1	Morocco-Spain	A dinghy carrying 8 migrants sank – <u>6 missing</u>	2	TMF, FE
2	Libya-Italy	A boat with about 180 people on board sank shortly after leaving – <u>70/80 missing</u>	10	TMF, FE
3	Libya-Italy	Two shipwrecks off the coast of Libya	130	TMF
6	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	100	MIGRE

31	Morocco-Spain	200 migrants attempted to cross the border fence in Melilla	-	MIGRE
31	The Italian Navy's operation <i>Mare Nostrum</i> ends			
November 2014				
1	The EU's operation <i>Triton</i> begins			
1	Morocco-Spain	Two migrants died during the crossing of the Stari of Gibraltar when they fell overboard	2	TMF
December 2014				
3	Morocco-Spain	Two migrants are suspected of killing 10 other migrants by pushing them from a boat	10	TMF
5	Libya-Italy	Migrants died of hypothermia/dehydration – 278 migrants were rescued	17	TMF, UIoD
6	Morocco-Spain	A vessel got into trouble south of Almeria – 30 were rescued, <u>20 missing</u>	-	TMF
19	Morocco-Spain	A boat capsized in Northern Morocco	9/3	TMF/UIoD
23	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	4	TMF
January 2015				
2	Libya-Italy	450 migrants in need at sea	-	MIGRE
30	Morocco-Spain	A boat carrying migrants sank near the Spanish enclave of Melilla	8	TMF
February 2015				
8	Libya-Italy	About 400 migrants involved, 4 dinghies – 29 died of hypothermia during rescue	329	MIGRE/ UoD
9	Libya-Italy	More than 20 died of hypothermia and another 15 were in critical condition	29	TMF
10/ 11	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	300	TMF/MIGRE
March 2015				
3	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck near the coast of Sicily – 127 rescued	90	UoD
4	Libya-Italy	A boat capsized off Sicily – <u>40 missing</u>	10	TMF, MIGRE
April 2015				
11	Libya-Italy	978 migrants were rescued by three merchant vessels and an Italian navy ship	1	TMF
13	Libya-Italy	Vessel capsized off Lybian coast – 144 rescued, only 9 bodies were found	400	UoD
15	Libya-Italy	Christians thrown overboard by Muslims in religious fight on way from Libya to Sicily	12	UoD
19	Libya-Italy	A boat capsized after collision with vessel near Gergarish – 100 migrants locked in ship	820	TMF, UIoD
20	Libya-Italy	Two boats carrying 400 people send distress calls – <u>380 missing</u>	20	TMF
May 2015				
3	Libya-Italy	Hundreds of migrants were rescued from at least 16 boats off Libya's coast	10	TMF
5	Libya-Italy	Migrants reported that about 40 other migrants had drowned during the journey	40	TMF
28	Morocco-Spain	A young migrant died in Melilla	1	PT
29	Libya-Italy	The Italian navy found 11 dead migrants on boats	11	TMF
31	Libya-Italy	17 bodies found on three inflatable dinghies – more than 300 migrants were rescued	17	TMF
31	Libya-Italy	More than 900 migrants got ashore in Sicily	-	MIGRE
June 2015				

6	Libya-Italy	Rescue operations involve more than 5,000 migrants	-	PT
7	Morocco-Spain	11 children's bodies found on a beach	11	PT
7	Morocco-Spain	44 migrants travelling on <i>pateras</i> were rescued	-	PT
15	Libya-Italy	A rubber boat capsized during a rescue operation	3	TMF
23	Libya-Italy	One migrant was shot during the crossing of the Mediterranean sea	1	TMF
July 2015				
7	Libya-Italy	After rescue, a migrant claimed that some 30 of his fellow travellers had died	30	TMF
9	Libya-Italy	12 migrants drowned in the sea – 500 were saved near Lampedusa	12	TMF
17	Libya-Italy	Syrian child died for lack of insulin	1	PT
23	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck	40	PT
25	Libya-Italy	1,200 migrants rescued and brought to Sicily	-	PT
28	Libya-Italy	13 bodies found on a boat with 522 migrants	14	PT
August 2015				
2	Libya-Italy	Five corpses found on a rubber boat carrying 212 others – 1,800 migrants rescued	5	TMF, PT
2	Morocco-Spain	Four men found dead at sea. They tried to get to Ceuta	4	TMF
3	Morocco-Spain	A 27 year old Moroccan found asphyxiated in a luggage on a ferry to Almeria	1	TMF
6	Libya-Italy	A boat capsized off the coast of Libya. 600/700 migrants involved – 400 were rescued	225	TMF, PT
11	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck – <u>about 60 migrants missing</u>	-	PT
15	Libya-Italy	49 people were found dead, probably from suffocation, on an overcrowded fishing boat	49	TMF, PT
16	Libya-Italy	Rescuers found one migrant dead – 354 rescued	1	TMF
22	Libya-Italy	3.000 migrants rescued in a few hours by the Italian Navy	-	PT
26	Libya-Italy	52/67 found dead in hold of migrant boat off Libya – 3,000 rescued	52/67	TMF, PT
27	Libya-Italy	Shipwreck – <u>more than 100 migrants missing</u>	-	PT
30	Libya-Italy	A boat carrying migrants sank off Libya's coast	37	TMF

After identifying the dates in which migrant border crossings occurred throughout time and starting from this calendar, the coverage of each news event was checked across the eight online news media platforms. In total, 35 news events were chosen for the Italian and Spanish context, respectively, as they were reported by the majority of the eight news media. In particular, for each country, 25 news events were analysed as national news and 10 as international news. Due to the high number of migrants who died in the latter group of events, in fact, the news had a widespread resonance at an

international level. The corresponding news items could thus be compared across both Italian and Spanish online news media.

In terms of data gathering, the news articles referring to national as well as international news were the first result displayed by *google.com*'s search tool, which was employed as the most popular way to source information online. By selecting the news items this way, a choice between a number of news articles updating the news coverage of the events was thus avoided. More details about how the news items analysed here were selected will be provided in Data presentation, the first section of the next chapter.

3.3.1 *Final remarks*

The selection of eight different online news media gave this study the opportunity to explore how the complexity of factors concerning the representation of migrants and their crossings of borders were articulated from various perspectives, in particular from traditional and independent news media's viewpoints. Furthermore, it shed light on the narrative choices that Italian and Spanish online news media made to narrate migrant border crossings. Overall, the collection of such a variety of news items enabled the comparison of news narratives about the same subject and the investigation of narrative patterns in Italian and Spanish online news media from September 2013 to August 2015.

Although the methodological approach described in this chapter was designed to respond to specific research questions, it can be easily adapted

and employed also in other qualitative analyses concerning online news, whatever the subject. As shown in this chapter, in fact, semiotic-informed methods are particularly flexible to investigate the news narratives that are produced in multimodal environments, which is an under-researched area of study (Unsworth and Cleirigh 2009; Bateman 2014), and to highlight processes of transformation of cultural meanings as well as journalistic practices. Hopefully, the methodology proposed here will constitute a valid contribution to the field of journalism studies as a comprehensive and structured set of methods for the qualitative analysis of online news production.

4.0 Data analysis

4.1 Data presentation

This first section of the Data Analysis chapter, which is divided into three main parts, aims to present the online news features of the items which were collected and analysed from January to May 2016. Online news features such as images and photo-galleries, videos, and hyperlinks, in fact, are important constituents of news narratives, which they articulate through different semiotic modes of expression (see Methodology). The current section, therefore, intends to compare the Italian and Spanish news coverage of migrant border crossings in the eight online news media considered in this study and show differences and similarities in the online news structure that they adopted, particularly across traditional and digital-born news media.

In order to clarify and support the further analysis of the selected news items, 10 analytical tables were designed. Each of them presents a selection of 35 dates, corresponding to 35 different news events, and constitutes the reference point for the analysis that will be developed in the second part of this chapter. Overall, event dates were selected among those provided by the table 'The calendar of news events' (see page 123, in Methodology) according to two main factors: the significance of the news event – as evidenced by the number of migrants involved in it – and the magnitude of the institutional actions concerning border management and search and rescue operations that were

employed. News events, as well as the differences between the datasets of the Italian and Spanish news items, will be presented more fully in this section.

The news items referring to the news coverage of migrant border crossings in the eight news media analysed here were searched by keywords and date, and by employing the online feature *Google News* of the search engine *google.com* – the list of the hyperlink contents analysed in this work is available in the Appendix section. The online search looked at results up to five days before and after the event dates suggested by 'The calendar of news events' in order to improve the chance of finding any corresponding news items. The five news sources that were used to draft 'The calendar', in fact, did not always agree on the dates concerning occurrences of migrant border crossings. This imprecision can be explained by the fact that these five sources' releases tended to rely on the news coverage of traditional news media, which were not always able to provide timely information, for whatever reason.

Delays in reporting the events of migrant border crossings by the four Italian and four Spanish news media considered in this study can be observed in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively, which also provide an overview of the event dates that were considered for the online search of news items. Furthermore, to show differences and similarities between the online news structures that characterise the eight news media's news narratives, one table for each news medium was designed and filled with details about features such as images and hyperlinks. The quantity and the diversification of visual elements and hyperlink content in news items, in fact, were supposed to reflect significant narrative developments as well.

To sum up, this Data Introduction will present 10 tables in total. Table 1 and Table 2 will provide a general outlook of all the news items collected, and of the Italian and Spanish news coverage of migrant border crossings from September 2013 to August 2015. Then, the eight following tables, which are grouped by country, will summarise the main online news features characterising the Italian (Table 3-6) and Spanish (Table 7-10) news items, respectively. The comparison of these tables' values, therefore, will call attention to the narrative structure of the news items that will then be analysed in the second section of this chapter.

4.1.1 *News items and structure of tables*

The 35 event dates that are listed in Table 1 as well as Table 2 are divided into 25 news events referring to the migrant crossings of a national border – the Libya-Italy and the Morocco-Spain border, respectively – plus 10 news events that were reported by both the Italian and Spanish news media due to the high number of migrants involved in the crossings. Each of the two tables, thus, presents 35 news events, whose corresponding news items are reported as 'available' (X) and 'not-found' (-) for each news medium. When different from those in 'The Calendar', publication dates are also recorded.

The ten news events which were covered by both the Italian and Spanish news media are those in the tables' horizontal rows, highlighted in grey. Three of them (dates: 2014.02.06; 2014.03.18; 2014.05.28) concern the news about the Morocco-Spain border, while the remaining seven refer to the Libya-Italy

border. The imbalance between the Italian and Spanish news coverage of events at each other's border is mainly due to the Italian news media, which frequently failed to report the migrant crossings at the Morocco-Spain border. When 14 migrants died in an attempt to cross the border in Ceuta (Table 1, 5), for instance, the news event was worth only of *repubblica.it*'s attention.

Furthermore, the 25 news dates/events referring to the national borders of Italy and Spain include news items enriching the overall news coverage. Consistent with the aims of this research, these news items concern the reporting of institutional activities of border control and management. In Table 1 and Table 2, they are highlighted with six and four asterisks, respectively, which are linked to the description of the news content at the bottom of the tables. In the following eight tables then, these news items are recorded in bold, in order to make them distinct from the others.

These supplementary news items provide the analysis of news narratives about migrant border crossings with contextual pieces of information. In the case of the Italian news coverage, for instance, they are about search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean. In the Spanish news coverage, on the other hand, these news items refer to the employment of security measures at the border, which shed light on the misconduct of border guards and their hostile relationship with the media. In addition, it is worth mentioning that, in the news coverage of the four Spanish news media, six news dates are marked with a capital p (Table 2 and Tables 7-10). This sign (**P**) characterises news items about the migrant crossings of the Strait of Gibraltar, the maritime border

between Morocco and Spain, and P stands for *pateras*, the wooden rafts by means of which migrants usually attempt the sea crossing towards Spain.

Finally, the eight tables referring to individual news media are divided into five columns: the first one, '*News event*', is filled with the dates on which the news was given by the news medium; next to it, there are three columns distinguishing visual news elements between '*Images*', '*Videos*', and '*Photogalleries*'; and, in the fifth column, the '*Hyperlinks*' within news articles are recorded – when visual, this is specified in the column.

To sum up, the two first tables (Table 1-2) outline the Italian and Spanish news coverage of migrant border crossings; the eight following tables (Table 3-10) show the online features of the news narratives about migrant border crossings that will be analysed across this chapter. Starting from the comparative analysis of the 10 tables, in the next two subsections initial differences in the online news features of traditional and digital-born news media will be highlighted.

Table 1. The Italian news coverage of migrant border crossings

	News event	<i>repubblica.it</i>	<i>corriere.it</i>	<i>lettera43.it</i>	<i>fanpage.it</i>
1	2013.09.30	X	X	X	X
2	2013.10.03	X	X	X	X
3	2013.10.11	X	X	X	2013.10.12
4	2013.10.15*	2013.10.14	2013.10.14	2013.10.14	-
5	2014.02.06	2014.02.07	-	-	-
6	2014.03.18	-	2014.03.28	X	-
7	2014.04.10**	X	X	-	-
8	2014.04.29***	X	X	X	-
9	2014.05.12	X	X	X	X
10	2014.05.28	2014.05.29	X	-	-
11	2014.06.14	X	X	X	X
12	2014.06.30	X	X	X	X
13	2014.07.02	X	X	X	-
14	2014.07.18	X	2014.07.19	-	-
15	2014.08.24	X	X	X	2014.08.25
16	2014.09.10	2014.09.16	2014.09.14	-	2014.09.17
17	2014.09.14	X	-	-	-
18	2014.10.02	X	-	-	X
19	2014.10.06	X	X	2014.10.07	X
20	2014.10.31****	X	X	-	-
21	2014.11.01*****	X	-	-	-
22	2014.12.05	-	X	-	-
23	2015.01.02	X	2015.01.03	X	-
24	2015.02.09	X	X	X	-
25	2015.02.10	2015.02.11	2015.02.11	2015.02.11	-
26	2015.03.04	X	X	X	-
27	2015.04.14	X	X	X	X
28	2015.04.19	2015.04.20	X	X	X
29	2015.05.05	X	X	X	2015.05.06
30	2015.06.06*****	X	X	X	X
31	2015.06.22	X	X	X	-
32	2015.07.23	X	X	-	-
33	2015.08.05	X	X	X	-
34	2015.08.15	X	X	-	-
35	2015.08.26	X	X	2015.08.27	X
	Total news items	34	31	23	15
<p>* The Italian Navy's operation <i>Mare Nostrum</i> begins ** and ***** News items reporting important rescue operations in the Mediterranean *** Italian government's release about the current situation at the border **** The Italian Navy's operation <i>Mare Nostrum</i> ends ***** the European Union's operation <i>Triton</i> begins</p>					

Table 2. The Spanish news coverage of migrant border crossings

	News event	elpais.com	elmundo.es	ediarario.es	infolibre.es
1	2013.09.16_P	X	X	-	-
2	2013.09.17	X	X	X	X
3	2013.10.03	X	X	X	X
4	2013.10.29*	2013.10.31	-	X	2013.11.02
5	2013.11.05	2013.11.06	-	X	X
6	2014.01.15	X	X	-	-
7	2014.01.20_P	X	X	X	-
8	2014.02.06	X	X	X	2014.02.07
9	2014.02.28	X	X	X	-
10	2014.03.18	X	X	X	X
11	2014.03.27	X	X	-	-
12	2014.03.28	X	X	X	X
13	2014.04.24	2014.04.25	X	2014.04.25	2014.04.25
14	2014.05.01	X	X	X	-
15	2014.05.12	X	2014.05.13	2014.05.13	-
16	2014.05.28	X	X	X	X
17	2014.06.20**	X	X	X	-
18	2014.07.01_P	X	X	-	-
19	2014.08.30	X	X	X	X
20	2014.09.10	2014.09.15	2014.09.15	2014.09.15	-
21	2014.09.14***	2014.09.15	2014.09.15	2014.09.15	2014.09.15
22	2014.10.01	X	X	X	-
23	2014.10.15	X	X	X	X
24	2014.12.05_P	X	X	X	-
25	2015.01.30_P	X	X	X	-
26	2015.02.10	X	X	X	-
27	2015.02.19	X	X	X	X
28	2015.03.11****	X	X	X	X
29	2015.04.14	2015.04.15	X	X	X
30	2015.04.19	X	X	X	X
31	2015.05.27	-	X	X	-
32	2015.06.07_P	2015.06.08	-	-	-
33	2015.08.03	X	X	X	-
34	2015.08.05	X	X	X	X
35	2015.08.26	2015.08.27	X	X	X
	Total news items	34	32	30	19
<p>* Instalment of razor wires on the Melilla fence ** Prodein's release of a video denouncing police violence towards migrants at the Melilla border *** Spanish court's sentence on the dispute over Morocco-Spain territories at the border **** Spanish journalist was detained by the <i>Guardia Civil</i> for helping migrants at the border</p>					

4.1.2 *The Italian news coverage of migrant border crossings*

The online news media through which the Italian news reporting of migrant border crossings is investigated here are: first, the online versions of the traditional daily newspapers *La Repubblica* (*repubblica.it*) and *Il Corriere della Sera* (*corriere.it*), and secondly, the digital-born news media *lettera43.it* and *fanpage.it*. As Table 1 shows, from September 2013 to August 2015 the first type of online news media produced extensive news coverage, which was also rich in visual content (Table 3-4). On the other hand, news coverage of migrant border crossings was not equally substantial in the two types of digital-born news media. Deficiencies can be observed also in the quantity and variety of news features such as visuals and hyperlinks that accompanied the news articles (Tables 5-6) in the time frame considered here.

The first two tables proposed in this subsection (Table 3-4) outline the features of the news items that were published by *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it*. In both traditional newspaper websites, the use of videos, whose digital format was also employed for audio materials only, was consistent and the diversification of their contents was noteworthy. In these tables, as well as in the following ones, videos are distinguished into interviews and audio interviews, documentary, and TV service-style videos, which differ from videos with voice-over for the additional graphics and brief interviews that they contain. Videos that are recorded simply as numbers, instead, are footage of rescue operations, labelled by the logo of the Italian Navy or other institutional actors such as NGOs. These videos, which do not include any verbal narration, were analysed

by means of the first layer of analysis, as video first-frames, since they consist only of images and environmental audio.

Other aspects of interest in the traditional Italian news coverage are the modest presence of single images, since photogalleries are preferred, and the low use of hyperlinks to expand news content further. Instead, the main news article is usually linked to videos and photogalleries. Moreover, there is a striking contrast between the usage of hyperlinks in traditional and digital-born news media. From the comparison of the respective '*Hyperlinks*' columns in Table 3 and Table 4 and Table 5 and Table 6, in fact, it emerges that *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* paid particular attention to the expansion of news stories through videos and visual news elements in general, contrary to the approach of *lettera43.it* and *fanpage.it*.

In the time frame considered here, the news coverage of migrant border crossings that these two digital-born news media provided was quite poor. Moreover, it is worth noting that their news coverage did not exploit online news features such as videos and hyperlinks, as it would be reasonable to expect from digital-born news media. In contrast, the two Italian traditional news media, *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it*, made an important effort to articulate news narratives visually, through different viewpoints, and constantly published videos, audio files, and other visual materials via hyperlink content (see Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3. Features of online news structure in repubblica.it

	<i>repubblica.it</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Videos</i>	<i>Photogalleries</i>	<i>Hyperlinks</i>
1	2013.09.30	1	1 interview	3	1+1 video + 1 audio
2	2013.10.03	1	1+1 audio interview	1	2
3	2013.10.11	1	(1 link to video)	1	2+1 online petition
4	2013.10.15	1	-	-	3
5	2014.02.07	1	-	-	-
6	---2014.03.18---	-----	-----	-----	-----
7	2014.04.10	1	1 interviews	1	1 video
8	2014.04.29	1	-	1	3+2 videos
9	2014.05.12	1	1	2	4+2 videos + 1 photogallery
10	2014.05.28	-	-	1 news	1 video
11	2014.06.14	1	2	1	1+4 videos
12	2014.06.30	1	1	-	2+3 videos
13	2014.07.02	1	-	-	-
14	2014.07.18	1+1 graphic	-	1	1 photogallery
15	2014.08.24	1	1+ 1 voice over + 1 interviews	2	1+2 videos + 1 audio
16	2014.09.16	1	-	-	1
17	2014.09.14	1	1	-	3
18	2014.10.02	1	1 documentary	-	2
19	2014.10.06	1	-	-	1
20	2014.10.31	1	-	-	1
21	2014.11.01	-	1 video news	-	2 videos
22	---2014.12.05---	-----	-----	-----	-----
23	2015.01.02	1	1	(2 links to photogalleries)	3+2 videos
24	2015.02.09	1	1 interview + 1 audio interviews	1	1+2 videos
25	2015.02.11	1	1 TV service + 1 interview	2	4+2 videos
26	2015.03.04	1	-	1	1+3 videos
27	2015.04.14	1	2	2	1+1 video
28	2015.04.20	1	2+1 interview	3	6+1 photogallery + 5 videos
29	2015.05.05	1	-	-	1+2 videos
30	2015.06.06	1	-	-	1+1 video
31	2015.06.22	1	-	-	-
32	2015.07.23	1	-	1	2 videos
33	2015.08.05	1+1 tweet	1 audio interview	1	2+3 videos
34	2015.08.15	1	2	1	3 videos
35	2015.08.27	1	1+1 interview	-	2+6 videos

Table 4. Features of online news structure in *corriere.it*

	<i>corriere.it</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Videos</i>	<i>Photogalleries</i>	<i>Hyperlinks</i>
1	2013.09.30	1	1 voice over + 1 audio interview	1	5+2 videos + 1 photogallery
2	2013.10.03	-	2+1 voice over + 1 interview + 1 TV service + 1 audio interview	1	6
3	2013.10.11	1+1 map	1 voice over	1	4
4	2013.10.18	1	1 voice over	-	-
5	2014.02.06	-----	-----	-----	-----
6	2014.03.28	-	1 video news	-	-
7	2014.04.10	1	-	-	1
8	2014.04.29	1	-	-	-
9	2014.05.12	3	-	1	2+2 videos + 1 photogallery
10	2014.05.28	-	-	1 photo news	-
11	2014.06.14	1	1 political speech + 1 political event	1	2+2 videos
12	2014.06.30	1	1+1 audio interview	-	5+3 videos
13	2014.07.02	1	1	1	4
14	2014.07.19	1	-	1	5+1 video
15	2014.08.24	-	1 video news	-	-
16	2014.09.14	1	1	2	1 photogallery
17	---2014.09.14---	-----	-----	-----	-----
18	---2014.10.02---	-----	-----	-----	-----
19	2014.10.06	1 photo news	-	-	5+3 videos
20	2014.10.31	2	1 streaming	-	4+3 videos
21	---2014.11.01---	-----	-----	-----	-----
22	2014.12.05	1	1	-	2+1 video
23	2015.01.03	1	-	1	2
24	2015.02.09	1	-	-	-
25	2015.02.11	1	2+1 interview	-	1+1 video
26	2015.03.04	1	1 voice over	-	-
27	2015.04.14	1	2+2 interviews + 1 political speech	1	3
28	2015.04.19	1+1 map	2+1 voice over + 1 interview	1	4+1 video + 1 map
29	2015.05.05	1	1 interview	-	-
30	2015.06.06	1	1	-	3
31	2015.06.22	1	-	-	-
32	2015.07.23	1	-	-	-
33	2015.08.05	2	(1 link to video)	-	1+1 video
34	2015.08.15	1	2+1 voice over	2	1+1 photogallery
35	2015.08.27	1+1 graphic	-	-	2

Table 5. Features of online news structure in lettera43.it

	<i>lettera43.it</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Videos</i>	<i>Photogalleries</i>	<i>Hyperlinks</i>
1	2013.09.30	2	-	1	2+2 photogalleries
2	2013.10.03	3+4 tweets + 1 graphic +1 map	-	1	5+1 photogallery +1 video (not working)
3	2013.10.11	1	-	-	2+1 photogallery
4	2013.10.14	1	-	-	1+1 (not working)
5	2014.02.06	-----	-----	-----	-----
6	2014.03.18	1	-	-	2
7	---2014.04.10---	-----	-----	-----	-----
8	2014.04.29	1+1 graphic	-	-	2
9	2014.05.12	2+1 graphic	-	1	3
10	---2014.05.28---	-----	-----	-----	-----
11	2014.06.14	2	-	-	2
12	2014.06.30	1	-	-	3
13	2014.07.02	1	-	-	2
14	---2014.07.18---	-----	-----	-----	-----
15	2014.08.24	2	-	-	3
16	---2014.09.10---	-----	-----	-----	-----
17	2014.09.14	-----	-----	-----	-----
18	---2014.10.02---	-----	-----	-----	-----
19	2014.10.07	1	-	-	3
20	---2014.10.31---	-----	-----	-----	-----
21	---2014.11.01---	-----	-----	-----	-----
22	---2014.12.05---	-----	-----	-----	-----
23	2015.01.02	1	-	-	5
24	2015.02.09	1+1 graphic	-	-	2
25	2015.02.11	1 graphic + box, Twitter conversation	1	1	5+1 photogallery
26	2015.03.04	1	-	-	3
27	2015.04.14	1	-	-	2
28	2015.04.19	2+3 maps + + 1 graphic + box, Twitter conversation	-	-	4
29	2015.05.05	1	-	-	2
30	2015.06.06	1	-	-	-
31	2015.06.22	1	-	-	-
32	---2015.07.23---	-----	-----	-----	-----
33	2015.08.05	1	-	-	1 tweet
34	---2015.08.15---	-----	-----	-----	-----
35	2015.08.27	1 map	1 (by <i>The Guardian</i>)	1	2

Table 6. Features of online news structure in fanpage.it

	<i>fanpage.it</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Videos</i>	<i>Photogalleries</i>	<i>Hyperlinks</i>
1	2013.09.30	1	-	-	-
2	2013.10.03	12+1 tweet + 11 tweets	2+1 voice over	-	-
3	2013.10.12	1	-	-	-
4	2013.10.18	-----	-----	-----	-----
5	2014.02.06	-----	-----	-----	-----
6	2014.03.18	-----	-----	-----	-----
7	2014.04.10	-----	-----	-----	-----
8	2014.04.29	-----	-----	-----	-----
9	2014.05.12	1	-	-	-
10	2014.05.28	-----	-----	-----	-----
11	2014.06.14	1	-	1	-
12	2014.06.30	1+1 tweet	-	-	-
13	2014.07.02	-----	-----	-----	-----
14	2014.07.18	-----	-----	-----	-----
15	2014.08.24	1	-	-	-
16	2014.09.17	1	-	-	3
17	2014.09.14	-----	-----	-----	-----
18	2014.10.02	1	-	-	-
19	2014.10.07	1	-	-	-
20	2014.10.31	-----	-----	-----	-----
21	2014.11.01	-----	-----	-----	-----
22	2014.12.05	-----	-----	-----	-----
23	2015.01.02	-----	-----	-----	-----
24	2015.02.09	-----	-----	-----	-----
25	2015.02.11	-----	-----	-----	-----
26	2015.03.04	-----	-----	-----	-----
27	2015.04.14	1	-	-	1
28	2015.04.19	1	1+1 voice over	-	-
29	2015.05.06	1	1 voice over	-	-
30	2015.06.06	1	1	-	1
31	2015.06.22	-----	-----	-----	-----
32	2015.07.23	-----	-----	-----	-----
33	2015.08.05	-----	-----	-----	-----
34	2015.08.15	-----	-----	-----	-----
35	2015.08.26	1	-	-	-

In the next section, the comparison with the two traditional and two digital-born Spanish news media will demonstrate that, in these news platforms, the structure of online news was instead linear and texts and visuals quite balanced (see Tables 8-10). However, while *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es* tended to publish videos documenting migrant border crossings, *eldiario.es* and *infolibre.es* uploaded only six videos across the 30 and 19 news items corresponding to their news coverage, respectively, which were analysed here for research purposes.

4.1.3 *The Spanish news coverage of migrant border crossings*

The Italian as well as the Spanish news media display differences between online versions of traditional daily newspapers and digital-born news media. In the Spanish case these are, respectively, *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es*, for *El País* and *El Mundo*, and *eldiario.es* and *infolibre.es*. Here, although *infolibre.es*' news coverage of migrant border crossings was not extensive, as gaps in both Table 2 and Table 10 highlight, discrepancies in the use and variety of online news features were visible across the four Spanish news media.

Overall, the structure of online news is characterised here by the consistent use of videos, the rare presence of photogalleries within news articles, and the abundance of hyperlink content, which mostly links news articles to internal webpages of the news outlet's website. In particular, video content can be divided into two main groups: videos including the audio narration of the news event ('voice-over', in the tables); and, security cameras'

footage, which mainly show migrants climbing and crossing the Melilla fence overnight. These latter recordings are usually mute, in black and white, and labelled with the logo of the Spanish police *Guardia Civil*.

Furthermore, photogalleries, when available, are commonly employed as hyperlink content, although news articles can also be accompanied by a series of individual pictures. In one case (Table 9, 23), for instance, the digital-born *eldiario.es* published 15 pictures within the same news article, which fragmented the text whilst narrating the news story visually. Images, graphics, and maps, then, frequently contain hyperlinks. In *elpais.com*, for instance, it is common for hyperlinks to enlarge visual news elements and open internal webpages, thus providing new pieces of information.

As Table 7 and Table 8 show, the online news structures of *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es* were similar from September 2013 to August 2015. It is worth mentioning, however, that in the early months of 2016, *elpais.com* started a phase of restyling its website. Initial changes were already visible in April 2016 on the news platform, particularly in standfirsts, from which hyperlinks might have been moved to other points of the webpage. As *El País'* editor-in-chief Antonio Caño (2016) announced officially, this renewal of the online platform was intended to improve *El País'* competitiveness in the global online news media market.

Finally, the comparison of Table 9 with Table 10, which describes the news coverage of migrant border crossings in *eldiario.es* and *infolibre.es*, demonstrates that visual communication is weak in both news media and that *infolibre.es* makes an abundant use of hyperlinks. In this digital-born news

medium, however, hyperlinks are rarely incorporated into the news article; rather, they are listed at its side and many of them refer to news items which were actually published at a later date ('later', in Table 10). This demonstrates that hyperlinks are selected and inserted into the news webpages through an automatic process, as the interview with a journalist working at *infolibre.es* then confirmed.

Despite the limited usage of the Internet features in both the Italian and Spanish online news media investigated here, the ten tables presented in this section of the Data Analysis highlight that videos and hypelinks were employed differently over the same period of time. For instance, the online version of the two traditional Italian newspapers tended to employ distinct forms of video such as interviews with public and local actors and video reporting. At the same time, Italian news media used this news material as a hyperlink content, at a greater extent than the traditional Spanish news media did. These, in fact, seemed to prefer the insertion of photogalleries and graphics into news articles, as shown in the tables' fifth columns, '*Hyperlinks*'.

Furthermore, as the analysis and comparison of the Italian and Spanish news items about migrant border crossings will emphasise, news narratives were shaped by the peculiarity of online news structures as well. Indeed, videos convey their very own narratives, which may imply both discursive intentions and embedded news values. In other words, the very choice of online features such as videos and hyperlinks to be included in the news, as well as the online news composition, acts as a narrative in itself (Bednarek and Caple 2012a; 2012b).

Within this framework, it is also worth observing that *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es* tended to produce linear and well-organised news structures and, in comparison with their Italian counterparts, their use of news visuals was quite traditionalist. In this regard, news articles were usually accompanied by one or two news pictures and/or a news video (see Table 7 and Table 8) at the top of the webpage. The visual analysis of the online news that has been produced by the two traditional Italian news media, on the other hand, has demonstrated that *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* tended to structure 'adventurous' news webpages (see Table 3 and Table 4). By intertwining a variety of digital formats conveying different pieces of information together, which in effect interrupt the flow of news articles, these two news media platforms engage with emotional aspects of the news by proposing visual and audio materials, often documenting first hand testimonies of rescuers and institutional figures.

Finally, both the Italian and Spanish digital-born news media considered here share an overall poor news coverage of migrant border crossings, with the noteworthy exception of *eldiario.es*. Its mixed business model, which is based on advertising and subscriptions (González-Esteban 2014), seems in fact to have guaranteed the necessary funding for an adequate journalistic reporting over time. As the interviews with journalists that will be analysed further in this chapter have confirmed, in fact, economic difficulties are the main reason for the inconsistent and limited news reporting of the migrant crossings at the borders.

Table 7. Features of online news structure in elpais.com

	<i>elpais.com</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Videos</i>	<i>Photogalleries</i>	<i>Hyperlinks</i>
1	2013.09.16_P	1	-	-	6
2	2013.09.17	1 (+1 in box*)	1+1 voice over	-	8
3	2013.10.03	1 link to map	1	-	4+1 photogallery
4	2013.10.31	2	-	-	2
5	2013.11.06	1	-	-	2
6	2014.01.15	-	1	-	5+1 photogallery
7	2014.01.20_P	-	-	-	-
8	2014.02.06	1 link to map	1 voice over	-	3+1 to map
9	2014.02.28	-	1	-	3
10	2014.03.18	1 graphic	1+ 1 security camera	-	5+2 photogalleries
11	2014.03.27	1	-	-	7
12	2014.03.28	-	2 voice over**	-	7
13	2014.04.24	1 link to photogallery	1 voice over	-	1+1 photogallery
14	2014.05.01	-	1	-	9
15	2014.05.12	1	-	-	7
16	2014.05.28	1 link to graphic +1 link to photogallery	1+ 1 security camera	-	4+1 photogallery
17	2014.06.20	1 link to photogallery	1 with subtitles	-	11+1 photogallery
18	2014.07.01_P	1	-	-	9
19	2014.08.30	2	-	-	2
20	2014.09.15	1	-	-	1
21	2014.09.15	-	1 voice over	-	17
22	2014.10.01	-	1	-	5
23	2014.10.15	-	1	-	5
24	2014.12.05_P	1	-	-	6
25	2015.01.30_P	1	-	-	7
26	2015.02.10	-	1	-	5+1 photogallery
27	2015.02.19	1	-	-	5
28	2015.03.11	1	-	-	8
29	2015.04.15	-	1	-	11
30	2015.04.19	1 map	1	-	5 (2 not working)
31	--2015.05.27---	-----	-----	-----	-----
32	2015.06.08_P	1	1 voice over	-	7
33	2015.08.03	-	-	-	-
34	2015.08.06	1	-	-	5
35	2014.08.27	-	1	-	6+1 photogallery

* The news item includes a second picture, but in a separated section, which refers to another news event.

** Due to technical problems, in this video the voice-over is covered by environmental audio, which mainly consists of shouts from migrants, and it is not possible to understand what is said here.

Table 8. Features of online news structure in elmundo.es

	<i>elmundo.es</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Videos</i>	<i>Photogalleries</i>	<i>Hyperlinks</i>
1	2013.09.16_P	1	-	-	5
2	2013.09.17	3	1 voice over	1	2+1 photogallery + 1 graphic
3	2013.10.03	1+1 map	1	-	2+1 photogallery
4	—2013.10.31---	-----	-----	-----	-----
5	---2013.11.06---	-----	-----	-----	-----
6	2014.01.15	-	1	-	2
7	2014.01.20_P	-	-	-	-
8	2014.02.06	1 map	1	-	-
9	2014.02.28	-	1 voice over	-	1+1 photogallery
10	2014.03.18	1	1	-	7+1 photogallery
11	2014.03.27	1	-	-	1
12	2014.03.28	1+1 graphic	1 voice over*	-	1 graphic
13	2014.04.24	1	-	-	1+1 graphic
14	2014.05.01	1	1	-	1+1 graphic
15	2014.05.13	1	-	-	-
16	2014.05.28	3	1 security camera	-	5+1 photogallery
17	2014.06.20	2	1 subtitles	-	1
18	2014.07.01_P	1	-	-	-
19	2014.08.30	1 link to photogallery	-	-	11+1 photogallery
20	2014.09.10	1	-	-	2
21	2014.09.14	-	-	-	2
22	2014.10.01	-	-	-	-
23	2014.10.15	-	1 voice over	-	6+1 photogallery
24	2014.12.05_P	1	-	-	-
25	2015.01.30_P	1 tweet	-	-	4
26	2015.02.10	1	1	-	2
27	2015.02.19	1	1	-	3
28	2015.03.11	1+1 tweet	-	-	-
29	2014.04.14	1	-	-	1
30	2014.04.19	1+1 map	-	-	6
31	2015.05.27	-	-	-	-
32	—2015.06.08_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
33	2015.08.03	-	-	-	1
34	2015.08.05	1 map + 1 tweet	1 voice over	-	10
35	2015.08.26	-	-	-	-

* Due to technical problems, in this video the voice over is covered by environmental audio, which mainly consists of shouts from migrants, and it is not possible to understand what is said here.

Table 9. Features of online news structure in eldiario.es

	<i>eldiario.es</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Videos</i>	<i>Photogalleries</i>	<i>Hyperlinks</i>
1	---2013.09.16_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
2	2013.09.17	1	-	-	-
3	2013.10.03	2+1 link	1	-	6
4	2013.10.31	2	-	-	4
5	2013.11.05	1+1 link+1 tweet	-	-	6
6	--2014.01.15---	-----	-----	-----	-----
7	2014.01.20_P	1+1 link	-	-	1 caption
8	2014.02.06	1	-	-	3
9	2014.02.28	2+1 link	-	-	1 caption
10	2014.03.18	2	1 security camera	-	-
11	--2014.03.27---	-----	-----	-----	-----
12	2014.03.28	1+3 tweets	1 security camera	-	1 photo+1 tweet
13	2014.04.24	15	-	-	-
14	2014.05.01	1+1 link	-	-	1 caption
15	2014.05.13	2	1 (not working)	-	3+1 caption
16	2014.05.28	1+1 tweet	1	-	1 tweet
17	2014.06.20	-	1 with subtitles	-	-
18	--2014.07.01_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
19	2014.08.30	1	-	-	-
20	2014.09.15	1	-	-	-
21	2014.09.14	1	-	-	-
22	2014.10.01	1+1 link	-	-	1+1 caption
23	2014.10.15	15	-	-	-
24	2014.12.05_P	1	-	-	-
25	2015.01.30_P	1+2 tweets	-	-	5
26	2015.02.10	1	-	-	2
27	2015.02.19	1	-	-	3
28	2015.03.11	1	-	-	2
29	2015.04.14	2+1 link	-	-	3+1 caption
30	2015.04.19	1+1 link	-	-	7+1 caption
31	2015.05.27	1+1 link + 1 tweet	-	-	4+1 caption
32	---2015.6.07_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
33	2015.08.03	1+1 link	-	-	4+1 caption
34	2015.08.05	1+1 link+1 tweet	-	-	2+1 photogallery +1 caption
35	2015.08.26	1+1 link	-	-	1 caption

Table 10. Features of online news structure in infolibre.es

	<i>infolibre.es</i>	<i>Images</i>	<i>Videos</i>	<i>Photogalleries</i>	<i>Hyperlinks</i>
1	---2013.09.16_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
2	2013.09.17	1	-	-	(5 later)
3	2013.10.03	1	-	-	(4 later)
4	2013.10.31	-	1 voice over	-	15 (9 later) +1 video
5	2013.11.05	1	-	-	11 (9 later)
6	---2014.01.15---	-----	-----	-----	-----
7	---2014.01.20_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
8	2014.02.07	1	-	-	14 (8 later)
9	---2014.02.28---	-----	-----	-----	-----
10	2014.03.18	-	1	-	9 (3 later) +1 video
11	---2014.03.27---	-----	-----	-----	-----
12	2014.03.28	-	1 video news	-	-
13	2014.04.24	1	-	-	17 (8 later)
14	---2014.05.01---	-----	-----	-----	-----
15	---2015.05.12---	-----	-----	-----	-----
16	2014.05.28	-	1	-	16 (8 later) +1 video
17	---2014.06.20---	-----	-----	-----	-----
18	---2014.07.01_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
19	2014.08.30	1	-	-	16 (8 later)
20	---2014.09.10---	-----	-----	-----	-----
21	2014.09.14	1	1 with subtitles	-	20
22	2014.10.01	-----	-----	-----	-----
23	2014.10.15	1 tweet	1 voice over	-	16+1 video
24	---2014.12.05_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
25	---2015.01.30_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
26	---2015.02.10---	-----	-----	-----	-----
27	2015.02.19	1	-	-	7
28	2015.03.11	1	-	-	8
29	2015.04.14	-	-	-	19 (15 later)
30	2015.04.19	1	-	-	10 (2 later)
31	---2015.05.27---	-----	-----	-----	-----
32	---2015.6.07_P---	-----	-----	-----	-----
33	---2015.08.03---	-----	-----	-----	-----
34	2015.08.05	1	-	-	7
35	2015.08.15	1	-	-	9 (3 later)

4.1.4 Online data gathering

Collecting online news items is a process challenged by unforeseen and sudden changes in news media websites as well as the introduction of new market strategies by news media organisations. For instance, as already mentioned in this section, at the beginning of 2016 *El País* started a process to redesign its online platform. During the same period of time, *Il Corriere della Sera* changed its online market model and introduced a metered paywall system on its website, which currently allows users to access 20 news articles a month before a paid subscription is requested. *Lettera43.it* also went through a selling process in spring 2016 and this led to both a change in private ownership as well as a logo and website redesign.

Furthermore, digital research should be aware of the limitations of online search engines, as data gathering processes can be influenced by their own ranking algorithms (Pan et al. 2007; Xiang and Gretzel 2010). *Google.com*, for instance, takes into consideration:

“...the number of distinct hyperlinks that point to a given webpage as an indication of how important the webpage is and news items are ranked according to the reliability of the news publishers” (Chung et al. 2012, p175).

In the case of the current study, therefore, a search tool like *Google News*, which also provides different results depending on the computer from which the research is undertaken according to the user's preferences, was employed cautiously and the existence of online news items was always double-checked on both *Google News* and the individual news media platforms.

In addition, the process of data gathering employed for the Italian and Spanish datasets tried to avoid inconsistencies by checking the hyperlinks available within the news items selected as well. As these hyperlinks acted as a solid reference to previous news articles and events, they allowed the data collection not to depend on *Google* algorithm and to strengthen the reliability of the news items selection.

Furthermore, since these news items were expected to shed light on the narrative development of the long-lasting news story about the crossings of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders by migrants, it is worth underlining here that Individual news items are not self-explaining and they should not therefore be considered as representative of the whole news story. Rather, they are fragments of a longer and complex narrative, which has been running for decades now in both Italy and Spain. Indeed, the scope of the methodology employed in this research is to highlight the characteristics of these narrative fragments as well as the narrative similarities and differences in the different news media platforms selected.

To sum up, the 10 tables here are a summary of the news items which were collected for research purposes. At the same time, they represent a valid visual tool showing research data in a comprehensive way and providing technical details about the structure of online news narratives as a whole. For these reasons, in the next section, the analysis of news items and changes in news narratives throughout time will refer to these tables systematically.

In the next section, the analysis will discuss the features of news narratives about migrant border crossings as well as the news representation of

migrants. Furthermore, in a following and final section, the analysis of the interviews with five Italian and five Spanish journalists will discuss how online news production has shaped such news narratives and representations through the practices and routines of journalists.

4.2 News items

This study aims to explore the representation of migrants at the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders as well as the news narratives about the migrant crossings of those borders. In particular, the analysis focuses on two aspects of the news: narrative construction, by highlighting the role of the actors involved in news stories, and journalistic practices, which concern news sourcing together with choices of visual materials and the working processes that turn news events into online news products.

The representations of migrants 'at the border' and the news narratives that are presented in this second section of the chapter emerged from the qualitative analysis of texts, pictures and videos, and hyperlink content in the 103 and 115 news items that were published by the four Italian and four Spanish news media, respectively, in the time frame considered in the study. How news narratives about migrant border crossings were constructed over time is also demonstrated here as well as in the next section of the chapter through the analysis of news sources and hyperlink content and the interviews which were conducted with five Italian and five Spanish journalists for research purposes.

Since news items and journalists' accounts provided two substantially different sets of answers to the two main foci of research, this chapter's content is arranged and divided into two further main sections. In the first, the analysis of the news items is presented in three consecutive subsections: *Italian*, *International*, and *Spanish news narratives*. In the second section, the analyses of news sources, hyperlinks, and interviews with journalists are intertwined to provide a comprehensive account of the production of online news articles about migrant border crossings in both the Italian and Spanish news media.

As a result, across the sections of this chapter, findings will demonstrate that there are discrepancies between the news narratives about migrant border crossings that journalists convey and the knowledge that they have about such events. This seems to be mainly due to journalistic practices, which affect the news narrative in ways that may often be unrelated to the journalists' actual standpoint. Tasks such as the choice and insertion of images and audio-video materials in the news webpage as well as hyperlinks in news texts, in fact, are performed by a variety of professionals, who do not have to discuss their decisions with the journalists authoring the news articles. Therefore, as it is shaped through the expertise of different executives, the online news can be considered as a 'choral product', whose final message is not fully under the control of its authors.

To sum up, news items, which answer research questions about the representation of migrants, will be analysed in this second part of the chapter. Separately, the findings concerning the construction of news narratives about migrant border crossings will be deduced from the analysis proposed in the third

and final part of the chapter, which concerns the interviews with journalists. Similarities and differences in the news narratives of the Italian and Spanish traditional and digital-born news media as well as changes in news narratives over time will instead be highlighted across all the sections of the chapter.

4.2.1 *Migrants 'at the border' in news texts, images, and videos*

In the following subsections, the analysis will provide news media representation of migrants and migrant border crossings from September 2013 to August 2015. The selected news items, whose content has been outlined in the 'Data presentation', will be analysed and grouped here into three consecutive sections: *Italian*, *International*, and *Spanish news narratives*. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, findings are common to the news articles of all the online news media considered in each section.

The *Italian* and *Spanish news narratives* sections will give an account of the representation of migrants in news about the crossing of both Italy's and Spain's national borders, respectively. The analysis proposed in the *International news narratives* section, on the other hand, will explore how the nature of the border affects the representation of migrants and will shed light on the cultural values and meanings which are communicated in the news. There, news events which had a widespread resonance due to the high number of migrants involved will be considered and, overall, the section will constitute a piece of comparative analysis between the representation of migrants in the Italian and Spanish news media. Furthermore, similarities and differences

between the representations of migrants attempting to cross the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders will be highlighted.

Although discrepancies may be attributed to the description of the two distinct geographical contexts, the findings which will be presented in the next three subsections will suggest that the main determinant of migrant representation is the 'nature of the border' itself. As the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders are substantially different, the first maritime and the second terrestrial, the migrants trying to cross them face different obstacles and risks. These, ultimately, shape both migrant representation and the representation of their crossing attempts.

4.2.2 *Italian news narratives*

Overall, in the news items considered for the analysis of Italian news narratives, the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean Sea are reported as a 'journey', whether it is 'of hope or desperation'⁷. Mainly, this story's narrative revolves around death⁸: the death of migrants in the Mediterranean and the death that migrants escape in their own home countries; the death that rescuers face when the conditions on the high seas are prohibitive (in particular, Table 1,

⁷ The common expressions which are frequently employed by the four Italian news media are: *viaggio della speranza* (journey of hope) and *viaggio della disperzione* (journey of desperation).

⁸ In particular, 24 out of the 35 news stories selected here mention the death of a number of migrants in news headlines and standfirsts. While eight of the remaining news items refer to rescue operations at sea and the landing of migrants in Italian sea localities (Table 1, 7, 17, 23, 30) as well as institutional releases about the implementation of security measures at the border (Table 1, 4, 8, 20, 21), three of them report the migrant crossings of the Morocco-Spain border (Table 1, 5, 6, 10).

23, 24, 25) and the death that fishermen witness while trying to support rescue operations along the coasts. Finally, there is the migrants' death that politicians call 'disgrace' (*disgrazia*), which they promise to prevent in the future, in news item after news item.

In the news texts, definitions of migrants are as 'shipwrecked people' (*naufraghi*), 'masses of desperate people fleeing from Africa'⁹, 'survivors' (*sopravvissuti*), 'refugees'¹⁰, statistics of live and dead people, women and children. Occasionally, they are also defined as 'non-EU citizens', (*extracomunitari*) (Table 3, Table 5, 1, 26; Table 4, 26), and 'clandestine people', (*clandestini*)¹¹ (Table 5, 30). The use of these two latter definitions reflects the way in which migrants were portrayed in the news mainly in the 1990s, when the terms were 'politicised' and at the core of a public debate depicting immigration in terms of a national problem (among others, Sciortino and Colombo 2004; Magnani 2011; Faloppa 2015 – as discussed in a dedicated section in the Literature Review, page 80).

⁹ In Italian, the original text states: "*masse di disperati in fuga dall'Africa*".

¹⁰ The Italian word that is translated here by 'refugees' is *profughi*. It has to be observed, however, that the meaning of the word *profugo* (sing.) does not refer to the political refugee status to which the English word refers when distinguishing migrants as refugees from migrants as asylum seekers. According to the online Italian dictionary *Treccani*, *profughi* may even be replaced with *sfollati* (evacuees) when the reasons forcing people to flee their countries are related to natural disasters.

¹¹ In the online Italian dictionary *Treccani*, the adjective *clandestino*, which in this context is employed as a noun, refers to something done in secret, something hidden. A 'clandestine immigrant' is therefore defined in the Italian dictionary as someone entering a country illegally. According to Faloppa (2015), the 'semantic shift' that occurred in the case of the word *clandestino*, whose meaning moved 'from hidden to illegal' with a specific reference to migrants, resulted in the 'naturalisation' of the substantive over time (p118). In this regard, its use became common also in administrative and juridical contexts.

The word *extracomunitario* (sing.) is never used in the media with reference to citizens of rich countries which do not belong to the European Union, according to the *Carta di Roma*¹² (*Associazione Carta di Roma* 2012, p21). The term would thus stigmatise migrants by implying a judgement about their poor origins. The definition of migrants as *clandestini* (plur.) is controversial as well (*Associazione Carta di Roma* 2012), since it conserves the meaning of migrants as 'illegal people' inherited from the 1990s. At that time, in fact, the use of the word *clandestini* was a "symbolic resource for the political and media discourse which emphasised a linkage between immigration and criminality" (Quassoli 2013, p206; see also De Genova 2013; Longhi 2013).

Indeed, the nominalisation of the adjective *clandestino* (sing.) seems to transfer the qualities of secrecy and illegality that the word implies from migrants' journeys to migrants themselves. However, it may be also observed that such a word represents just a trace of a previous system of ideas and that, in the news, it has been overtaken by more emotional adjectives such as 'desperate' and 'hopeless' people, which are so frequent in Italian journalism (Colombo and Sciortino 2004, p111). The word *clandestini*, in fact, can be interpreted as a synonym of 'irregular migrants' – although the *Carta di Roma* firmly advises journalists against employing it anyway (*Associazione Carta di*

¹² The *Carta di Roma* is the protocol that was drafted for the first time in 2008 by the Italian National Press Federation (FNSI). It provides working tools for the correct coverage of migration and asylum issues in the media. Although the protocol criticises the use of the word *clandestino* in the media as highly stigmatising, it affirms that such a definition is correctly employed when referring to foreigners who do not have documents such as residency permits and visas in order, whatever the circumstance (*Associazione Carta di Roma* 2012, p21). Nevertheless, the protocol strongly suggests avoiding the word *clandestino* and choosing more suitable definitions for migrants' life circumstances.

Roma 2012, p21) – but the idea of the 'illegality' of migrants (De Genova 2013; Andersson 2014; Raeymaekers 2014) was not actually exploited in the news items considered in this study. A more humanitarian approach prevailed (Caviedes 2015) in the time frame considered here, probably due to the tragic circumstances of the news events which were reported.

Moreover, in these news items the background of the migration flows across the Mediterranean is simply outlined in terms of 'war', 'poverty', and 'hope for a better future'. Not even the hyperlinks lead to any in-depth analysis of the migratory context; rather, they reiterate the same news narrative by linking similar news articles about events of migrant border crossings one to another. Furthermore, the journalists authoring the news items here seem not to consider the political and socio-economic implications that the existence of borders as well as institutional measures of border management and control would suggest.

From this perspective, journalists' choice of words stigmatises migrants less than their narration of migrants' stories does. In the news about migrant border crossings, in fact, migrants, as 'shipwrecked' people, are just helpless 'victims' (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015), to such an extent that even their testimonies are related by other voices, mainly those of NGOs and UNHCR representatives. The mention of migrants' nationalities in news articles acts to misrepresent them as well. In particular, migrants are distinguished between

'Sub-Saharans'¹³ and Syrians, as if Sub-Sahara is a country of origin of migrants. Rather, 'Sub-Saharan' highlights the colour of migrants' skin, while 'Syrians', in contrast, emphasises migrants fleeing the war in their own country.

Overall, in news images and videos, migrants' faces are portrayed from a long distance, on crowded boats in distress in the Mediterranean, and their dead bodies are hidden in coffins and blue and green plastic bags on the docks (see '4.2.5 Samples of news pictures', page 182). The misery of their journeys is told through the images of their naked feet coming ashore, where migrants show hands and forearms marked with numbers¹⁴ (for instance, Table 6, 29 – video¹⁵) while awaiting identification.

The videos narrating rescue activities in the Mediterranean, on the other hand, which are a feature of the online news of *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* (Table 3, Table 4), closely describe the emotional impact that such operations have on rescuers, whether they are members of the Italian Navy, the Italian Coast Guard or one of the NGOs operating at sea such as Doctors without Borders and Save the Children. In the videos and audios in which rescuers are

¹³ In Table 6 (19), for instance, *fanpage.it* highlights such a distinction by titling one section of the news article, as follows: "Migrants coming from Syria and Sub-Saharan Africa". In Italian, this title is, literally: "*Migranti provenienti da Siria e Africa sub-sahariana*".

¹⁴ The samples here constitute the first image available in the corresponding news webpages. It is worth considering that news items can be composed of a variety of visuals (see Tables 3-10), reporting distinctive aspects of news stories such as rescue operations and landing of migrants. As a result, different representations of migrant border crossings can be given at once in online news.

¹⁵ This *fanpage.it*'s video is titled: "*I migranti diventano 'numeri': sulle mani codici identificativi*". Its literal translation is: "Migrants become 'numbers': on the hands (they have) tracking numbers". The video, which consists of a series of frames depicting numbers on migrants' hands and forearms, has been watched 97,153 times (last access 21st June 2016).

interviewed, they state that their job is to provide aid at sea (Table 1, 32, 34), no matter what sea conditions prevail (Table 3, 24, 25), and are shown to be deeply moved by the scenes they witness, which are particularly cruel sometimes. This was the case on 15th August 2015 (Table 1, 34), when the bodies of forty young male migrants¹⁶, who probably died from suffocation, were found in a ship's hold whilst several women were crying on the deck. As the news reports, the men paid a higher price for a place on the deck for their women only.

To cover the news about the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean, which in the period of time covered here was considered the most deadly migratory route in the world (UNHCR 2016a; 2016b), the news media have to choose whether death should be explicitly shown or not. The analysis of the Italian news items reveals that, apart from *corriere.it*, the Italian news media avoided visually representing migrants' deaths, even when the pictures available might have given them the opportunity to do so. In one case (Table 1, 1), for instance, the same set of images of 13 male migrants' bodies lying on a beach in Sicily under the gaze of tourists circulated across the newsrooms but only *corriere.it* published as pictures a few video frames of the bodies before they were covered with a sheet by the police¹⁷ (see '4.2.5 Samples of news pictures', page 186).

The fact that one of the oldest Italian newspapers, *Il Corriere della Sera*, published crude images of migrants' bodies (Table 4, 1, 13, 15 – video) seems

¹⁶ According to *corriere.it*, 49 bodies were found.

¹⁷ It seems, however, that *fanpage.it* did not have access to such visual material at all, since it published an archival image representing a rescue operation at sea.

to indicate that the conventional proximity between social norms and values and the representation of death (Hanusch 2012) is not the only factor affecting visual communication about the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean. The pictures published by *corriere.it* in fact reveal the 'conceptual setting' (see Mirzoeff 2011a; Mirzoeff 2011b) of the migration story from Africa, which seems to refer to a war-like context. Indeed, as will be demonstrated later, migration across the Mediterranean is framed as a 'fight' against traffickers. Coherently, therefore, news texts and images tend to portray migrants mainly as victims on crowded boats while their rescuers, whether they are members of humanitarian or security organisations, are represented as saviours protecting human rights as well as the nation's civic values.

From this perspective, a maritime border such as the Mediterranean Sea influences the representation of migrants in the news for two main reasons: as a sea, it is imagined as "elemental, primordial and unchanging" (Mirzoeff 2009, p291) and thus what happens there can be thought of as 'natural' and beyond human responsibility; as a border, it is made visible essentially by the monitoring and control of the migratory flows across the sea (Pezzani and Heller 2013). Moreover, the deployment of search and rescue resources conceals the fact that migrants are not worthy of substantial and decisive interventions such as the creation of humanitarian corridors, which would prevent them from risking their lives at sea (Pezzani and Heller 2013).

In the Italian news about migrant border crossings, the border is a 'cemetery' (*cimitero*), the 'intolerable Mediterranean, sea of death'¹⁸. In order to

¹⁸ In Italian, the *repubblica.it*'s standfirst reads: "*Intollerabile Mediterraneo mare della morte*"

reduce calamities at sea and deal with migration from Africa, the Italian Navy's operation *Mare Nostrum* was launched on 18th October 2013 (Table 1, 4). The then Italian Minister of the Interior Angelino Alfano presented *Mare Nostrum* as the 'military and humanitarian operation' aiming to 'fight' the phenomenon of clandestine immigration. According to him, the protection of the 'European frontier'¹⁹ would have worked as a deterrent to human traffickers from North Africa.

However, a series of shipwrecks of migrant boats further showed that the Minister was wrong, since that day the news began to progressively outline the political response to immigration in terms of a 'fight against traffickers, merchants of death'²⁰ (Table 1, 22). This reflects one of the characteristics of the Italian news narrative about migrant border crossings: news narratives strongly rely on politicians' statements and direct quotations. As a result, journalistic communication is dominated by political expressions and thinking. However, apart from *corriere.it*, which tended to frequently quote the Minister of the Interior's declarations, thus highlighting centre-right discourses, in the news items analysed here different political viewpoints are usually balanced.

(Table 3, 4).

¹⁹ During the press conference, which is extensively reported in the news n° 4 (Table 1) and whose words are literally translated and reported here in Italics, the Minister Alfano employs the expression *frontiera europea* (European frontier) – and not *confine europeo* (European border) – to talk about the Mediterranean Sea. In Italian language, there is a difference between these two terms: the first, *frontiera*, refers to a narrow strip of land that is just before the border; the second term, *confine*, demarcates the actual boundary of a state's territory.

²⁰ The Minister Alfano defined traffickers as 'merchants of death' (*mercanti della morte*) after the news of a shipwreck in which 18 migrants died. He also stated that the fight against traffickers was "the most important thing" (*la cosa più importante*) and that, on this matter, Libya should be considered as a priority from the International community.

When the Italian *Mare Nostrum* operation ended in October 2014²¹ and the European mission Triton started immediately after, the statements released by the EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, supported the Italian Minister of the Interior's political intention: “the fight against migrant traffickers was a priority” (Table 4, 23 – headline). Later on, in June 2015, the European mission EUNavforMed was launched “to attack the business model of the people responsible for migrant trafficking”²² (Table 4, 31) and a debate about the creation of 'hotspots' on both sides of the Mediterranean began at a European level.

To conclude, from September 2013 to August 2015 the news narrative about migrant border crossings has been characterised by changes towards a war-like political language. Throughout the months, such changes moved conceptually from humanitarian intervention to military action against migrant traffickers at sea as well as the intention of controlling migrants' movement by law, by planning to “ensure the quick identification and registration of migrants, and the taking of migrants' fingerprints”²³ at the border (Table 4, 31).

In the Italian news articles considered here, political aims were not questioned by the journalists authoring the news articles and thus nor was the language employed by politicians. Strengthened and promoted at a European level, the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean were depicted through a war-

²¹ The *Mare Nostrum* operation officially ended on 31st October 2014, although it supported the European mission Triton, which started the day after, until the end of the year (Table 1, 21).

²² The original text, in Italian, states: “EUNavforMed' ha l'obiettivo di attaccare il modello di affari dei responsabili del traffico di migranti”.

²³ These 'hotspots' involved the active support of national experts and of EASO (the European Asylum Support Office), FRONTEX, and Europol (The European Police Office).

like language, which cast migrants themselves as war victims. Whether migrants were from geographical areas in which a conflict was actually ongoing or not, in a capacity as voiceless people they were represented as victims of human traffickers, who challenged national and European policies on immigration²⁴.

²⁴ From the news item n° 30 (Table 3, Table 4), terrorism, as a narrative novelty, was introduced in news stories about immigration from Africa. At the beginning of June 2015, in fact, the Islamic State (IS) kidnapped 86 Christian Eritreans, who were travelling to Tripoli, in Libya, from where they intended to then move towards Europe. A few days later, in the news item n° 31 (Table 1), a Libyan patrol vessel was accused by a few survivors to have shot at the migrant boat on which they were travelling – the Libyan Navy denied the fact. These two news items signalled the emergence of an increasing violence against migrants in news about the crossings of the Libya-Italy border – a violence to which Italy, in accordance with other European governments, claimed to react by deploying military forces.

The case of Spain is slightly different. In the Spanish dataset, the role of the *mafias* in the crossings of the Strait of Gibraltar by migrants was first mentioned in January 2014, when a group of migrants attempted to reach Melilla by sea (Table 2, 7). The involvement of human traffickers was then called into question again at the beginning of August 2015 (Table 8, 33), closely following the newly emerged Italian attitude towards immigration. On that occasion, the news articles highlighted the Spanish government's effort to deal with human trafficking in the Central Mediterranean. In the news item that was published on the 20th January 2014 (Table 2, 7), on the other hand, the news story revolved around the drowning of one of the migrants who dived off the *patera* on which they were travelling in order not to get caught by the police who were approaching the boat. In this news narrative, the presence of the *mafias* contrasted with the agency of the *Guardia Civil*, which was timely, if not providential, in rescuing all the other migrants who were into the sea. Furthermore, on that same occasion, a government representative declared (Table 7, 7) that the “mafias do not care at all about these people (migrants) nor their individual circumstances” (*las mafias no tienen ningún tipo de consideración por estas personas, ni por su situación personal*). This statement reinforced the narrative contrast between the two types of organisations, the *mafias* and the *Guardia Civil*, and avoided mentioning the involvement of the Spanish government as the actor responsible for the security measures at the border. In addition, as emphasised in *elmundo.es*' news article (Table 8, 7), the news highlighted the fact that migrants threw themselves into the sea – they were the troublemakers – and “the Guardia Civil had to rescue them one by one” (*Esto obligó a la Guardia Civil a rescatarlos uno a uno*).

4.2.3 *International news narratives*

Seven of the 10 news events analysed in this section refer to shipwrecks that occurred between Libya and Italy, in each of which hundreds of migrants died. In the Italian news items, this news coverage matched the patterns of migrant representation which have been presented in the previous section, although with some elements of novelty, mainly related to the strong presence of the Pope's statements in the narrative. In the Spanish news, on the other hand, the same news coverage showed how migrants were represented in the crossings of a border that does not directly involve Spanish sovereignty. Likewise, the remaining three news events analysed here, by referring to the migrant crossings of the Morocco-Spain border in Melilla and Ceuta, showed how the Italian news narrative framed the migrant crossings of a non-national border.

The comparison of the eight online news media's narrative will highlight how, from both a linguistic and a conceptual perspective, the representations of migrants in the news depended on the very nature of the border. In fact, if migrants' deaths in the Mediterranean tests out the concept of border and draws attention to political and human responsibilities (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Puggioni 2015), the news about the crossing of a 'terrestrial' border implies a different range of migration-related meanings and cultural values.

To begin with, the reaction of the international community to the shipwreck which occurred near the Italian island of Lampedusa on 3rd October 2013 (Table 1, 2; Table 2, 3) is outlined here through the perspectives of three

major actors: the then Italian Minister of the Interior, Angelino Alfano, the then European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, and the Pope.

On that occasion, the Italian Minister formally began his political ambition to involve the European Union in the management of migration in the Mediterranean and declared: “I saw the bodies, a horrific scene offending both the West and the European Union. I hope that Providence wanted this tragedy to open the eyes of Europe”²⁵ (Table 3, Table 5, 2). The European Commissioner, on the other hand, in the same news articles blamed traffickers for “the exploitation of human despair” and demonstrated a ‘paternalistic’ attitude towards migrants as well as the inactive approach that the European Union maintained until June 2015. Pope Francis, finally, firmly stated that this particular tragedy was a ‘disgrace’ (*vergogna*) and called for collaboration from all sides to prevent shipwrecks from happening again²⁶.

While acknowledging that ‘the dream that migrants try to turn into reality’ while crossing the Mediterranean towards Italy was ‘to reach Europe’²⁷, the eight online news media did not engage with the narration of the political and historical contexts of migration. Although most of the 366 migrants who died in

²⁵ The Italian Minister' original statement is, as follows: “*Ho visto i corpi, una scena raccapricciante, che offende l'Occidente e l'Europa. Spero che la divina provvidenza abbia voluto questa tragedia per far aprire gli occhi all'Europa*” (Table 3, Table 5, 2). It is worth mentioning that, in both the Italian and Spanish political speeches, *Europa* is frequently used as a synonym of ‘European Union’.

²⁶ Furthermore, the Pope kept repeating that migrants who die at sea “are men and women like us, seeking a better life” (Table 1, 28; Table 2, 30). He did it so firmly that, in the news, his interventions seemed to balance politicians' statements, which rather focused on the emergency of immigration from Libya.

²⁷ The original expression, in Spanish, is: “*tratando de hacer realidad el sueño de llegar a Europa*” (Table 8, 15).

the shipwreck were from Somalia and Eritrea and the news event thus offered the opportunity to reflect, for instance, on the colonial legacy of Italy in both countries, the two countries' pasts were not mentioned.

In further news articles then, when migrants' stories of detention and torture in Libya were told (Table 1, 16, 27, 35; Table 2, 20, 29, 35 – see news pictures, page 187), the news narrative represented migrants as victims in all respects, deprived of any free will and aspirations. The fact that the detention facilities built in North Africa since the 1990s thanks to the European funding are an integral part of the migratory context in Libya (Hamood 2008; Andrijasevic 2010; Mountz and Loyd 2013) was also omitted. The migrants' stories, which may have acted as springboards for in-depth analyses in the news, were thus silenced.

In the early Spanish news articles about the migrant crossings of the Sea towards Italy, Spain was not even exposed as a European Union member state involved in the context of African migration. Through the words of its Prime Minister, Spain became a public actor in international news only in April 2015, when, in four days, more than 1,500 migrants died in two consecutive shipwrecks (Table 1, 28; Table 2, 30). On that occasion, Spain's approach to immigration was nevertheless presented as prudent and defensive, in line with its Prime Minister's words²⁸: “No nation can deal alone with such a tragedy. A

²⁸ This quote, which was reported by *eldiario.es*, is slightly different from the one that *infolibre.es* published. In the first news text, translated above, Mariano Rajoy's statement is: “*No hay ninguna nación que pueda hacer frente solo a esta tragedia. La respuesta tiene que venir de Europa. (...) Los europeos nos jugamos nuestro crédito si no somos capaces de evitar estas dramáticas situaciones*”. It is worth observing that in the text it is employed here the word *crédito*, reputation, instead of *prestigio*, prestige, which is instead used in *infolibre.es*. However,

response should come from Europe (...) As Europeans, we will risk our reputation (*crédito, prestigio*), if we are not able to avoid such dramatic situations”.

Only the two Spanish digital-born news media reported the Prime Minister's statement (Table 9; Table 10, 30). Nevertheless, it is worth considering that the European Union, as the main political actor on the scene, was already being pressed for action by the international community. It was already being criticised as well (among others, Casas-Cortes et al. 2012; Follis 2015). On the occasion of the two major shipwrecks in April 2015, for instance, the video-interview published by *corriere.it* (Table 4, 28) showed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' spokesperson, Carlotta Sami, resolutely stating that “making people die (in the Mediterranean) will not prevent others from departing”²⁹.

As shown in the previous section, the Italian news about the migratory flows from Africa represented migrants as victims of poverty and traffickers and the passivity of their role in the news narrative was balanced by the active role and sometimes emotional involvement of rescuers. These characteristics were less evident in the Spanish news, since there the narrative mainly focused on the striking repetitiveness of the shipwrecks and on the need for the

it may be said that the meaning is virtually the same. The original text states: “*Europa se juega su prestigio si no es capaz de evitar tragedias como esta (...) se trata de ‘un drama humanitario’ y la respuesta debe proceder de Europa*” and it can be translated as: “If Europe is not able to avoid such tragedies, its reputation (*prestigio*) is at risk. Since it is ‘a humanitarian drama’, a response should come from Europe”.

²⁹ Carlotta Sami's statement reads: “*Far morire le persone non impedirà che altre partano*”.

participation of the European Union in rescue operations³⁰. However, it is worth considering that among the official news sources that the Spanish online news media employed there were also the Italian *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it*. How these latter news platforms reported migrant border crossings was thus reflected in the news coverage of their Spanish counterparts, whose narratives essentially resembled the Italian ones.

Indeed, it is the comparison of the news narratives about the migrant crossings of the maritime border between Libya and Italy and of the terrestrial border between Morocco and Spain that shows how the nature of the border is determinant in the representation of migrants. In the first case, the Spanish news narrative portrays migrants as ‘fugitives from Africa’ (*fugitivos de Africa*), ‘undocumented’ (*indocumentados, sin papeles*), *desaparecidos*, ‘people with no name’³¹ (*personas sin nombre*) and, only later on, as ‘refugees’ (*refugiados*) and ‘alleged refugees’ (*presuntos refugiados*). In the second case, in contrast, migrants are described as active people. For instance, in the Italian news narrative about the migrant crossing of the Melilla fence (Table 1, 5, 6, 10; Table 2, 8, 10, 16), the border is the ‘enclosure’ (*recinzione*), the ‘wall’ (*muro*), the ‘barrier’ (*barriera*) that migrants attempt to climb. In *repubblica.it* (Table 3, 10)

³⁰ Initially, however, *elpais.com* had a quite critical attitude towards the Italian government (Table 7, 3). In particular, it blamed the Italian migration management in Lampedusa and accused the government of turning its back on migrants both on the sea and on land.

³¹ In the Italian news can be found the same expression: ‘*persone senza nome*’. A variation of that is in the news n° 2 (Table 5), where migrants are called “*vittime senza nome ingoiate dal Mediterraneo*”, whose translation is: “victims with no name (who are) swallowed by the Mediterranean”.

the Melilla border fence is “the ‘wall’ dividing Africa from Europe”³², the ‘protection barrier’ (*barriera di protezione*) that migrants assault (Table 3, 10 – headline and caption).

In the news, migrants are the *African migrants* who seek to enter Europe with an ‘unstoppable motivation’ (*spinta inarrestabile*), although the European Union has ‘locked doors’ (*porte serrate*) in Africa (Table 3, 5). In *lettera43.it*, the migrants’ run towards the Melilla border fence (Table 5, 6) was turned into a description of the ‘mass assault’ (*assalto di massa*) of clandestines on the ‘frontier barrier’ (*barriera della frontiera*). The scene was narrated as an authentic military action: “After the assault of a thousand migrants, the Moroccan security forces prevented a squad of about thirty of them, which was close to the barrier, from accessing the frontier”³³.

Such an evocative narration, reminiscent of the Spanish news narratives reporting the crossings of the national border, implies us-others, inside-outside conceptual relationships between the actors involved and could not be used in the description of the migrants crossing a ‘frontier zone’ (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) as the Mediterranean. The analysis suggests that it is probably with this in mind that the Italian Minister of the Interior, Angelino Alfano, forged the definition ‘Mediterranean frontier’ as the original political tool that could

³² Title of *repubblica.it*’s photo-news is: “*Melilla, il ‘muro’ che divide l’Africa dall’Europa: l’assalto dei migranti*”.

³³ The news text in Italian reads: “*Le forze di sicurezza marocchine hanno impedito l’accesso alla frontiera di un drappello di una trentina di migranti, dei mille che hanno mosso l’ultimo assalto*”.

conveniently parallel the boundary of the ‘Schengen frontiers’³⁴ (Table 3, 21). As shown in the previous section, in fact, while the Italian news narrative mainly revolves around migrants’ death and desperation, the political speeches that are reported in the news try to involve the European Union in the management of migration in support of Italy in order to share with it duties and responsibilities.

In the Italian news, the Morocco-Spain border was also presented as ‘a frontier that kills’³⁵ (Table 3, 5) when, at El Tarajal, the Spanish beach of Ceuta, nine migrants drowned while swimming from the Moroccan shores on 6th February 2014 – the cause of migrants’ death was their clash with the police who attempted to repulse them (García Gaibar 2015). Although the event occurred at sea, El Tarajal was described as the terrestrial border (*confine*) at which ‘the locked doors of Europe’ were set (Table 3, 5 – see also news pictures, page 200). It is worth pointing out here that the word ‘border’ is never used to describe the Mediterranean Sea. Nevertheless, the political use of the expression “doors of Europe” is largely employed in the Italian migratory context as well as in the news: it usually refers to Lampedusa, which is indeed the ‘land’ that migrants first reach after crossing the sea.

It has been observed (Ricci 2015, p72; see also Montanari 2004) that the expression ‘doors of Europe’ may even conceptually stand for the border

³⁴ ‘Mediterranean frontier’ is the literal translation of *frontiera Mediterranea*. This expression, together with ‘Schengen frontiers’ (*frontiere di Schengen*), was employed by the Italian Minister Alfano during the press conference in which he announced the launch of the European mission Triton.

³⁵ *Repubblica.it* titles one of the sections of the news article, as follows: “*Una frontiera che uccide*”.

trenches from which national territories are defended from the migrant 'invasion'. Metaphors of war and war actions are in fact a *leitmotiv* in political speeches as well as news narratives about migration. They are productive discursive tools that disqualify migrants as a social group by representing them as masses of people deprived of political subjectivity (Musolff 2012). As Bettini (2012) has pointed out, "the vulnerable beings disappear into the images of massive movements – the 'rising tides' and 'human tsunamis' from developing countries" (p70), to the advantage of imaginaries in which the Western world is laid siege to by migrants from the south and is thus in need of protection and security measures.

From this perspective, in Ceuta as well as in Melilla, where the Spanish border overlaps the European boundary and fences, police forces, and technological security tools make the borders clearly visible (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008; Levy 2010; Campesi 2012; De Genova 2013), migrants are the people trying to enter Europe without being 'authorised'. In the Mediterranean Sea, on the other hand, where migrants survive or die, often depending on whether they are rescued or not, the concept of border as the line delimiting national and supranational sovereignty is absent. The Italian news narrative implicitly reveals that by appointing the island – the soil – of Lampedusa as the "doors of Europe".

From this perspective, the matter of the limits of sovereignty and responsibility at sea became quite explicit on the 10th February 2015³⁶, when

³⁶ Probably about 420 migrants were involved: about 210 were travelling on two inflatables, which were found empty, while about 100 were on another inflatable, which was never found.

four inflatables in distress and crowded with migrants were reached by the Italian Coast Guard near the Libyan coast (Table 1, 25). As reported in the news articles covering the event, the European operation Triton, conducted by FRONTEX, had been considered inadequate by the Italian Navy since the beginning of its activity in the Mediterranean. Due to Triton's lack of means of rescue and its limited territorial area of action, therefore, the Italian Coast Guard kept monitoring as far as the coasts of Libya.

In February 2015, the controversy with the European institutions became open and clear after a public statement from FRONTEX. The European agency for the control of the borders, in fact, declared that rescue operations outside Triton's operating areas were “not consistent with (FRONTEX) working plan and would not be considered”, since they were “neither necessary nor convenient with respect to the costs”³⁷ (Table 4, 25). As a response, the Italian Coast Guard decided to apply the International Maritime Law to fulfil its duty to rescue people in distress at sea.

In the next section, the analysis will keep highlighting how news meanings about migrants depend on the specific nature of the border. The Spanish news narrative, in fact, employs different evocative descriptions to refer to the migrants climbing the border fences in Melilla or embarking on *pateras* to cross the Strait of Gibraltar. As the analysis will demonstrate, overall, in both

Among the migrants who were rescued, 29 died of hypothermia on the rescuers' ships (Table 4, 25).

³⁷ The original news text in *corriere.it* reads: “I soccorsi «in zone poste fuori dall'area operativa di Triton non sono coerenti con il piano operativo e purtroppo non saranno prese in considerazione in futuro» (...) azioni «non necessarie né convenienti sotto il profilo dei costi»”.

cases the news articles tend to avoid discussing the Spanish government's responsibilities at the Morocco-Spain border. Furthermore, in the third and final part of this chapter, the analysis of the interviews with Spanish journalists will clarify that the 'spectacular' news visuals depicting the migrant attempts to cross the Melilla border are what actually makes migrant border crossings a newsworthy event.

4.2.4 Spanish news narratives

The comparison between the online news articles published by the two traditional and two digital-born Italian news media does not show substantial differences between their narrations of the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean. This is not the case in the Spanish news media, where distinct approaches to migration characterise both news language about, and visual representation of, migrants³⁸. In the two traditional news media the 'immigrants' (*inmigrantes*) are, first of all, 'Sub-Saharan' (*subsaharianos*) and 'undocumented' (*indocumentados*; *sin papeles*³⁹ – literally, 'without papers'). Particularly in *elpais.com*, their 'massive assaults' (*asaltos masivos*) of the Melilla fence are described as 'floods' (sing. *aluvión*) and 'avalanches' (sing.

³⁸ How migrants are represented visually in the news will be developed in the section about the interviews with Spanish journalists, since the matter is strongly influenced by the role that news agencies play in the overall selection of visual material about migrant border crossings. The possibility for journalists of selecting images and videos, in fact, is limited and cannot be ascribed to their narrative purposes only.

³⁹ The expression '*sin papeles*' is sometimes employed within double inverted commas and in Italics (Table 7, 8, 12, 14; Table 8, 2, 19). In general, however, the use of '*sin papeles*' is more common in *elpais.com* than in *elmundo.es*, where '*subsaharianos*' seems to be preferred.

avalancha). On the other hand, the two digital-born news media write about *los inmigrantes* as *personas* (persons) and *subsaharianos*, the people coming from Sub-Saharan Africa⁴⁰ who attempt the 'jump' (*salto*) of the 'border' (*frontera*) in Melilla or Ceuta (see table below).

Comparison of wording: sin papeles (S), indocumentados (I), subsaharianos (SubS), personas (P)

News items		<i>elpais.com</i>	<i>elmundo.es</i>	<i>eldiario.es</i>	<i>infolibre.es</i>
1	2013.09.16_P	S 1; I 1, SubS 3; P 14	SubS 6; P 4	-	-
2	2013.09.17	S 4; SubS 5; P 3	S 1; SubS 3; P 2	SubS 3; P 9	SubS 4; P 3
3	2013.10.03	P 1	I 3; P 5	P 12	P 3
4	2013.10.29*	No ref. to migrants	-	P 1	P 3
5	2013.11.05	SubS 5	-	SubS 3	I 1; SubS 1; P 3
6	2014.01.15	SubS 4; P 4	I 1; SubS 4	-	-
7	2014.01.20_P	SubS 1; P 1	SubS 3; P 1	SubS 4; P 6	-
8	2014.02.06	P 6	I 1; SubS 5	P 6	P 4
9	2014.02.28	SubS 1	SubS 1	SubS 2; P 1	-
10	2014.03.18	SubS 5; P 1	S 1; SubS 4; P 3	SubS 1; P 8	P 4
11	2014.03.27	S 2; P 1	SubS 1	-	-
12	2014.03.28	S 4; SubS 2; P 2	SubS 4 P 3	SubS 2; P 4	-
13	2014.04.24	SubS 10; P 3	SubS 3	P 3	P 3
14	2014.05.01	S 2; SubS 6; P 3	SubS 7	SubS 4; P 4	-
15	2014.05.12	S 1; P 2	P 2	P 5	-
16	2014.05.28	S 2; I 1; SubS 4; P 3	SubS 2; P 1	SubS 3; P 3	SubS 2; P 3
17	2014.06.20**	S 4; SubS 2; P 2	SubS 4; P 2	P 4	-
18	2014.07.01_P	S 3; SubS 1; P 1	SubS 2; P 1	-	-
19	2014.08.30	S 1; SubS 1	S 1; SubS 5	SubS 1; P 1	S 1; SubS 4
20	2014.09.10	P 7	P 6	P 3	-
21	2014.09.14***	S 3; SubS 1	SubS 1	P 1	P 1
22	2014.10.01	S 3; SubS 2; P 2	SubS 2; P 3	SubS 1; P 1	-
23	2014.10.15	S 1; P 2	SubS 4; P 1	SubS 3; P 7	(only 'immigrants')
24	2014.12.05_P	S 3; SubS 2; P 1	SubS 1; P 6	P 9	-
25	2015.01.30_P	S 1; I 1; P 5	S 1; P 5	I 1; SubS 2; P 8	-
26	2015.02.10	SubS 3; P 4	SubS 4	SubS 4; P 7	-
27	2015.02.19	SubS 4; P 2	SubS 4; P 4	SubS 2; P 5	SubS 2; P 1
28	2015.03.11****	S 1; SubS 2	SubS 2; P 1	SubS 3; P 4	SubS 2; P 3

⁴⁰ This line is the literal translation of: "*las personas procedentes del África subsahariana*" (Table 10, 2).

29	2015.04.14	P 4	P 10	P 2	P 2
30	2015.04.19	P 3	P 3	P 8	P 1
31	2015.05.27	-	P 2	P 5	-
32	2015.06.07_P	S 1; P 1	-	-	-
33	2015.08.03	SubS 3	SubS 4	P 10	-
34	2015.08.05	P 6	P 16	P 13	P 3
35	2015.08.26	I 3; P 11	P 4	P 4	P 6

The comparison of wording presented here demonstrates that *eldiario.es* and *infolibre.es* tend not to use the words *sin papeles* and *indocumentados* in their news articles – exceptions are the news items n° 25, *eldiario.es*, and n° 5 and n° 19, *infolibre.es*, in which these words are employed once. The table also shows that, in the news items referring to international news events (highlighted in grey) such as shipwrecks in which a number of migrants drowned (n° 3, 15, 20, 29, 30, 34, 35), the word *personas* recurs across news headlines, standfirsts, and articles frequently. The use of *personas*, which is commonly followed by a number, seems to imply a sort of 'neutrality' in contexts of border crossings in which many migrants die. In addition, references to the 'illegality' of the crossings are usually avoided in these news articles.

As the analysis of the Italian news narratives has previously highlighted, the practice of representing migrants as masses of desperate people threatening national borders is common to both Italian and Spanish news media – and it has a rich tradition of academic investigation across different immigration countries as well (among others, Erjavec 2003; Leach and Zamora 2006; de Haas 2008; Baker et al. 2008; Don and Lee 2014). However, the interviews with journalists that will be analysed in the third section of this chapter will demonstrate that it may be difficult to *prove* that in news narratives about migrant border crossings there is an intentional manipulation, aiming to reinforce particular political viewpoints, by journalists and news media organisations more broadly. In the news articles that were analysed, in fact, journalists tend to reproduce the language of politics by including quotes from politicians' public statements, without questioning political wording. In this way,

journalistic communication neglects both the contexts of migration from Africa and those in which migration-related words have been coined in the first place.

For instance, in Spain, the words ‘avalanches’ (*avalanchas*) and ‘waves’ (*oleadas*) were first adopted with reference to migration from Africa in public discourse, and subsequently in the media, in the late 1990s, when the economic crisis began to spread and immigration was considered one of the factors that was responsible for that (Leach and Zamora 2006; de Haas 2008; González-Enríquez 2009). It may be argued that the use of ‘avalanches’ and ‘waves’ were initially favourable to the politicians’ standpoints attempting to draw attention to the number of migrants, who were accused of saturating the job market and increasing unemployment rates among national citizens (Leach and Zamora 2006; de Haas 2008; González-Enríquez 2009). Nevertheless, it is through their continuous reproduction in the news that the two words remained in use and were then integrated into common parlance, detached from their original context and meaning (see Barthes 2000).

From this perspective, the analysis of the misrepresentation of migrants in the news through the use of individual words by journalists may not be very productive. Rather, it is noteworthy that the two traditional Spanish news media produced suggestive *descriptions* of the crossings at the Melilla border by referring to the physicality of migrants. For instance, by implying the strength that is necessary to climb the “physical obstacle between Morocco and

Melilla”⁴¹, *elpais.com*, tended to propose evocative and sometimes ambiguous characterisations of migrants, which also involved ambivalent meanings (Macagno and Walton 2010; Macagno 2012). Take the description of the ‘battle’ (*batalla*) at the Morocco-Spain border on 17th September 2013 (Table 7, 2), which was reported in one of *elpais.com*'s videos. There, the voice-over narrated:

“On the line that separates two continents, people coming from Africa jump with agility to overcome the last three obstacles which divide them from (their) goal (...) they are people who went on a long journey and are ready for any kind of jump in order to leave their world behind”⁴².

On that occasion, a part of the Melilla fence was devastated by the force of about three hundred migrants and about a third of them reached Melilla. All four news media reported the violent and aggressive migrants' behaviour (Table 2, 2) but only *elpais.com* seemed to suggest that was an attitude characteristic of the migrants. In the news article referring to another border crossing in Melilla, one of the most numerous ever, with about five hundred migrants involved (Table 2, 10), *elpais.com* described migrants as ‘bats’⁴³ (*murciélagos*):

⁴¹ This line is translated from a news item by *elmundo.es*, where the ‘fence’ (*valla*) in Melilla is described this way. The original text is: “*el obstáculo físico entre Marruecos y Melilla*” (Table 8, 2).

⁴² The text is translated literally. The transcription from the video in Spanish reads: “*En la línea que divide dos continentes, los que vienen de África saltan con agilidad para superar los tres últimos obstáculos que les separan de la meta (...) son gente que viene de un largo viaje, dispuesta a cualquier salto para dejar detrás su mundo*”.

⁴³ It is worth highlighting that the visuals published by *elpais.com* did not encourage to imagine migrants as a flock of bats. The picture published by *eldiario.es*, instead, may do (Table 9, 10 –

“seen from afar, with their black clothes, they resemble a flock of bats hanging on the wire fence”⁴⁴. Furthermore, in the same text, some of the migrants in their run towards the CETI⁴⁵ were described as ‘winners’ (*victoriosos*), “like the athlete who has won a marathon, finally”⁴⁶. This type of excitement was represented⁴⁷ in all the three videos that *elpais.com* published in order to document migrant arrivals to the CETI after climbing the Melilla fences (Table 7, 9, 10, 16⁴⁸).

see news picture, page 181). A possible interpretation is that at least a number of the same pictures was available to both the newsrooms and, while the image under consideration was probably viewed at *elpais.com*, it was certainly published by *eldiario.es*.

⁴⁴ The transcription of the original text is: “*Vistos desde lejos, con sus ropas oscuras, se asemejan a una bandada de murciélagos colgados en la alambrad*”.

⁴⁵ This acronym means: *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes*, which can be translated as ‘Centre for the Temporary Stay of Immigrants’.

⁴⁶ The original line states: “*Victoriosos. Como el atleta que acaba de ganar un maratón*”.

⁴⁷ During one of the two interviews at *El País*, one journalist commented that he/she was aware of the fact that the representation of such excitement may give ‘a distorted view’ (*una imagen distorsionada*) of immigration. In order to explain the beauty, rather, of this migrants' joy – and to express his/her sympathy for migrants – he/she thus added: “That's life (...) it's just a moment, but it is a moment of achievement of a dream”. In Spanish this statement stands, as follows: “*Es la vida (...) es un momento, pero es un momento de consecución de un sueño*”.

⁴⁸ As Table 7 shows, *elpais.com* published 23 news videos across 19 out of the 34 news items that were analysed for research purposes. With regard to the Spanish terrestrial border in Morocco, 12 of these videos documented occurrences at the Melilla (Table 7, 2, 6, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 23, 26) and Ceuta (Table 7, 2, 8) border fences.

Animalisation of migrants: a flock of bats



This picture, which was published by *eldiario.es* (Table 9, 10), may encourage the description of migrants as a “flock of bats”. Nevertheless, such a form of animalisation in the representation of migrants has never been employed by *eldiario.es* – *elpais.com* was not used to this type of description either (see footnote 43).

In the Spanish news media, migrants turn from the desperate and helpless people of the Italian news narratives into the fighters who try to conquer Melilla. Likewise the Italian news represents the migrants attempting to cross the Morocco-Spain border, as shown in the previous section. The Italian news narratives also acknowledge that human rights are violated there and that migrants often have “legs and heads broken by the brutality of the security forces surveilling both sides of the border”⁴⁹ (Table 3, 5). Nevertheless, the Italian news does not clarify the degree of the involvement of the Spanish and Moroccan police corps in the violence against migrants. It does not even distinguish between the two, simply mentioned as ‘the police’ (*la polizia*)⁵⁰.

In the Spanish news articles, instead, migrant border crossings are narrated through the reporting of the continuous human rights violations in which the Spanish and Moroccan police are involved. However, while

⁴⁹ This line is a translation from *repubblica*'s article. The original text reads: “*Gambe e testa rotti dalla brutalità delle forze di sicurezza frontaliere, che da entrambi i lati sorvegliano*”.

⁵⁰ The only exception was found in *corriere.it* (Table 4, 10), where the Moroccan and Spanish police were both mentioned in relation to the events at the border.

elmundo.es and, partially, *infolibre.es* seem to adopt an overall balanced approach to the misconduct of the two police forces in Melilla and Ceuta⁵¹, it is in *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es* that the two news narratives adopt conflicting points of view. A clear example of that can be seen in the headlines that were published by the two news media on the 24th April 2014. They are, respectively: “21 migrants enter Melilla after confronting the police”⁵² (Table 7, 13) and: “Police brutality and illegal forced returns of immigrants in the last attempt to climb the fence”⁵³ (Table 9, 13 – see news pictures, page 196).

The legitimacy of the Spanish government in protecting its own borders – and thus the resulting *Guardia Civil*'s actions – are a sensitive issue in the Spanish news items analysed here, to such an extent that the national authority of Morocco and Spain over the Melilla border was still a matter of discussion in September 2014 (Table 2, 21). When the responsibilities for the forced returns of migrants were formally ascribed to the Chief of the *Guardia Civil* in Melilla, the judge had first to clarify in the decision where, across the three layers of the border fence, Spain's territory actually began⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Throughout the months, both Moroccan security forces and *Guardia Civil*, the Spanish police force, were accused of returning migrants forcibly by national and international human rights organisations. However, violent ‘forced returns’ (*devoluciones en caliente*) are only an aspect of the police's abuses against migrants at the Morocco-Spain border (Table 2, 17 – video).

⁵² *Elpais.com*'s original headline is: “21 inmigrantes entran en Melilla tras enfrentarse con la policía”.

⁵³ *Eldiario.es*' original headline is: “Violencia policial y devoluciones ilegales contra los inmigrantes en el último salto de la valla”.

⁵⁴ The judge declared that, according to the International Treaties between Morocco and Spain, the Spanish territory begins on the internal line of the third fence. He also remarked that two different concepts of border exists in Melilla, which are of ‘juridical’ (*de naturaleza jurídica*) and ‘operative or functional nature’ (*de naturaleza operativo o funcional*), and added that the “latter

Overall, the Spanish news items about migrant border crossings did not provide any substantial background to the African migration to Spain, not even through hyperlink content. In the two traditional Spanish news media, for instance, hyperlinks were mainly used to show photogalleries, maps, and statistics about migrant crossings and propose internal news articles about similar news events. This occurred particularly in *elpais.com*, where hyperlink content also tended to emphasise institutional viewpoints and focus on security and defence issues at the Morocco-Spain border (Di Renzo, forthcoming)⁵⁵.

Nevertheless, it can be said that news narratives were also expanded this way, since the representation of the Spanish government at the border prevailed in the news items analysed here. The deployment of Spain's institutional resources such as the police force, *Guardia Civil*, the sea search and rescue organisation, *Salvamento Marítimo*, and the Spanish Red Cross, *Cruz Roja*, indeed made the Spanish government the main protagonist of news narratives about the migrant attempts to cross the border in Melilla and Ceuta.

As previously observed, the Italian as well as the Spanish news narratives avoided engaging with the historical context of migration – how the dispute over the Spanish territory in Melilla was outlined in the news is a clear example of that. The news was mainly based on official sources and political

seems to meet a political criterion of the government or simply of the police's efficiency". The original line is: "*el segundo parece responder a un criterio de gobierno, político, o de simple operatividad policial*" (Table 10, 21).

⁵⁵ In sharp contrast to these themes and *elpais.com*'s use of hyperlink content, in *eldiario.es* hyperlinks tend to stress the absurdity of the border security measures and the violence that both Spanish and Moroccan border guards perpetrate on migrants at the Melilla and Ceuta borders (Di Renzo, forthcoming).

speeches and did not contain in-depth analyses of the events (Humanes Humanes et al. 2013). Overall, the lack of focus on the migration story and on migrants' experiences was filled with the overwhelming presence of the Spanish government's security rationale, although, it has to be said, *eldiario.es* stood out because of its criticism of the security forces acting on both sides of the border.

This was visible also in the news articles about migrant search and rescue missions in the Strait of Gibraltar (Table 2, 7, 18, 22, 24, 25, 32 – see news pictures, page 202), in which *Salvamento Marítimo* and the *Cruz Roja* exhibited major institutional powers by deploying resources and personnel for the rescue and care of migrants. It is nevertheless noteworthy that when migrants' death at sea was reported in the news, the narrative pointed at the natural conditions which turned the crossing of the Strait into a tragic event, without mentioning Spain's controversial political choices about migration and border management (Andersson 2014; Cembrero 2016).

Take, for instance, the news article that *elpais.com* published on 1st October 2014 (Table 7, 22), where the opening line reported that it was the Mediterranean Sea that “claimed, once more, the lives of two immigrants”. By making the Sea responsible for the death of migrants, the news narrative avoided drawing attention to the border control measures that pushed migrants to rely on human traffickers in order to cross the Morocco-Spain maritime border (see also Di Renzo, forthcoming). In contrast, the video first frame here portrayed a *Guardia Civil's* vessel docked in a harbour at sunset. Similarly, on 30th January 2015, in another *elpais.com's* news article, the coverage of at least six migrants' death of at sea had a literary-like intro: “Dawn has brought the

death back to the Mediterranean. Suffering comes back to dye the waters between Europe and Africa”⁵⁶ (Table 7, 25).

Similar to the visuals that were published in other news articles about rescue operations (Table 7, 24 – see news picture, page 198), the *elpais.com*'s news picture here represented a woman migrant getting ashore while she is surrounded and supported by attentive members of the *Cruz Roja* and the *Guardia Civil*. Although the woman is at the centre of the image, the number of people around her seems to dominate the scene.

As demonstrated in this section, migrants are not only victims, the vulnerable people reaching Spain through illegal means (Martínez Lirola 2014) or the “impersonal figures” of the newspaper cartoons (Domínguez et al. 2014, p817). They are also the people who face the police and react to police brutality at the border with stones and sticks (Table 2, 2, 23) whilst trying to climb a six-meter high triple fence with improvised scaling gear. Individual stories of migrants are not included in the overall news narrative⁵⁷.

In the final main section of this chapter, the analysis of news articles about the migrant crossings of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain border will be deepened through the analysis of the interviews with five Italian and five Spanish journalists. Through a comprehensive approach, the analysis will show how journalistic practices and working routines affected the production and the

⁵⁶ The original two news texts state, respectively: “*El mar Mediterráneo se ha cobrado este miércoles, de nuevo, la vida de dos inmigrantes*”; and: “*La madrugada ha devuelto la muerte al Mediterráneo. El sufrimiento vuelve a teñir las aguas que separan Europa y África*”.

⁵⁷ Among the 35 news events analysed, as an exception, there is only the story of Mirelle, who has been the first woman to climb the Melilla fence, on 28th February 2014 (Table 2, 9). See Di Renzo (forthcoming) for the analysis of this specific news item.

structure of the online news items analysed here as well as the overall representation of migrants and migrant border crossings in the news.

4.2.5 Samples of news pictures

News about migrant border crossings

News pictures about the same news story in the four Italian online news media: *repubblica.it*, *corriere.it*, *lettera43.it*, and *fanpage.it*, respectively (Table 1, 12). It is worth observing that these images portray four different vessels and it is not immediately possible to know if any of them is the one in question. Furthermore, these pictures accompany news articles about a boat on which the bodies of 30 migrants were found. Although this narrative element is given in the headlines of all the four news items, there is no reference to migrants' deaths in the news pictures here. It can be argued that this results from specific editorial choices, as discussed in this chapter.





The retrieval of migrants' bodies on repubblica.it (Table 3, 2, 25, 28, 29)





The representation of death (Table 1, 1)

The first three pictures here belong to a series of images that *repubblica.it*, *corriere.it*, and *lettera43.it* shared, as a number of them were published as a photogallery on their news platforms (Table 1, 1). Only *corriere.it* showed images in which migrants' bodies were not yet covered – the one proposed here seems to be a video frame. The fourth picture draws attention to the use of archive pictures on *fanpage.it*.





News pictures from corriere.it and repubblica.it (Table 3; Table 4, 13)

These three images about the recapture of migrants' bodies (*corriere.it*) comprise an individual photogallery, whose first slide warns of the reproduction of sensitive material (Table 4, 13).





Below. This news picture is the only one accompanying the news article that was published by *repubblica.it* on 2nd July 2014 (Table 3, 13), the same day on which the news pictures here above were displayed by *corriere.it*. Although the headline of *repubblica.it* reads: “Pozzallo, 45 dead people on the horror boat” (*Pozzallo, 45 i morti nel barcone dell'orrore*), the news picture, which may be an archive image, represents in contrast the reassuring landing of a migrant after a rescue operation. This demonstrates that the daily newspaper *La Repubblica* follows specific guidelines about the publication of graphic images, as one of the interviewees working at *repubblica.it* then confirmed. In this regard, he/she said that the picture of Aylan's body lying on a Turkish shore has never been published by the newspaper for editorial reasons.



Libya and human traffickers: International news items (Table 1, 16; Table 2, 20)

In summer 2014, several shipwrecks of migrant boats were signalled off the Libyan coasts (see 'The calendar of news event', page 123). In particular, on 10th September, a boat with about 500 people was sunk by traffickers themselves – only nine migrants were rescued. On that occasion, the Italian *repubblica.it*, *corriere.it*, *lettera43.it* and the Spanish *elpais.com*, *elmundo.es*, *eldiario.es* (in this order, below) published news articles addressing the migration crisis in the Mediterranean rather than covering this event in-depth (see Table 1, 16; Table 2, 20 for the different dates of news publication). Among the news pictures here, which presumably are all archival, only the fourth (*elpais.com*) can be linked to Libya (mentioned in the caption). Nevertheless, the news articles indicate this country as a major actor in the migrant trafficking across the Mediterranean. In addition, as an example of the striking contrast between news pictures and the headlines to which these can be connected, the first image is considered here (*repubblica.it* – upper-left corner, below). It is the only picture accompanying the news article and the headline immediately above it, a direct quotation by a survivor, reads: “The traffickers sank the boat, then they were looking at us as we were drowning” (“*Gli scafisti hanno affondato il barcone, poi sono rimasti a guardarci affogare*”). The news picture, on the other hand, portrays a group of migrants standing on a dock.



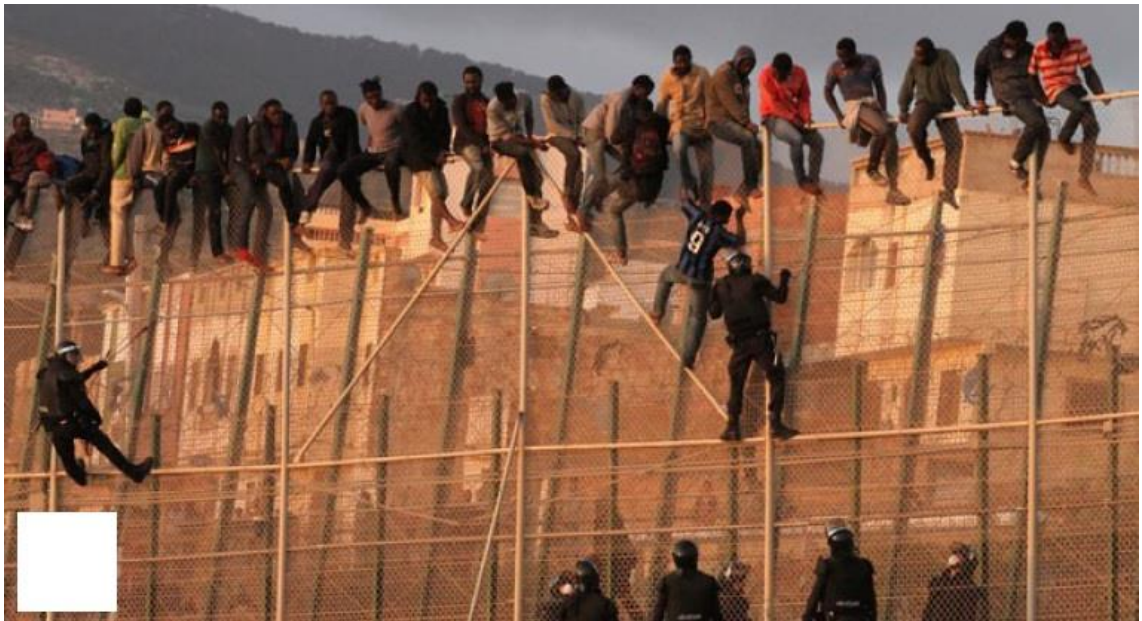
Furthermore, it is worth observing that, with the exception of the fifth news picture (*elmundo.es*), which portrays the bodies of three migrants lying on a dock, *repubblica.it*'s news picture as well as the other images tend to represent migrants as inactive people, awaiting assistance, despite the range of other possible ways to visually document the complex geopolitical context in which migrants undertake their journeys from Libya towards Europe.





News pictures about a migrant attempt to climb the Melilla border fence (Table 2, 23)

The first two images here are the first frames of the videos that *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es* published on 15th October 2014. The following two images are those accompanying the news articles of *eldiario.es* and *infolibre.es*, respectively, about the same event.





Comparison: news item n° 13 in elpais.com (Table 7, 13)

The first image below here constitutes the video first frame; the second one is the small picture that is proposed alongside the article on the news webpage. While the headline emphasises the entry of migrants to Melilla, the video voice-over draws attention to the positive outcome of the crossing by migrants, although only 21 out of about a hundred of them actually reached Melilla.

In particular, the audio narration of the events begins with: “They shout their victory as they have succeeded in getting here” (*Gritan su victoria porque han conseguido llegar asta aquí*) and then it continues by describing how migrants overcame the police block. The video then concludes by including footage and audio comments about the role of the *Cruz Roja* at the border, which “takes care of the migrants who are injured” (*se ocupa del los heridos*). The reporting of the events does not focus on the police's behaviour; rather, the video here shows that, at some point, the police let some migrants free to run towards Melilla's CETI. However, from the footage, it emerges that several journalists and photographers witnessed the events as they occurred and this may have eventually moderated the police's reaction.



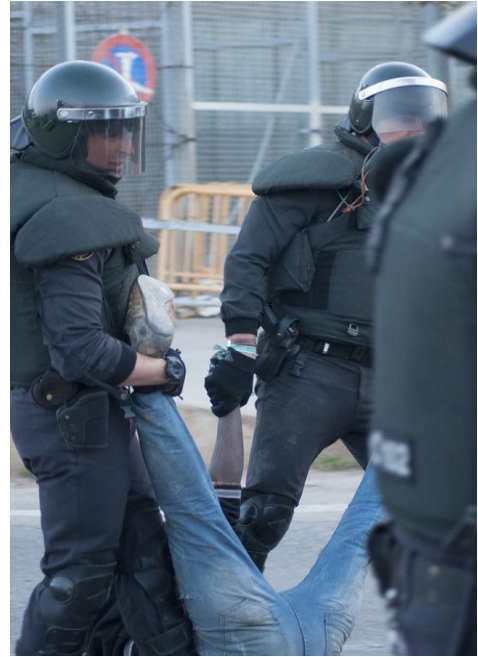
News item n° 13 in eldiario.es (Table 9, 13)

Among the 30 news items from *eldiario.es* that have been analysed in this study, only once did this online news medium employ a photogallery to document migrant border crossings, and it was through a hyperlink content (see Table 9, 34). Nevertheless, in the news item n° 13 (Table 9) and again as a *unicum*, *eldiario.es* published 15 news pictures as a sequence of images intertwining the news article in order to describe the 'police brutality' that is mentioned in the headline. Here, the anchorage between news text and images strengthened the overall message and therefore the news medium's standpoint on similar occurrences.









News item n° 13 in elmundo.es (Table 8, 13) and infolibre.es (Table 10, 13)

Here, *elmundo.es* publishes only one news picture to document the news event. The image (below), which is static and does not create emotional engagement with the spectator, highlights the presence of the police force, which seems to have control over migrants as well as the overall situation. In contrast, the headline of this news article reads: “Dozens of immigrants are involved in (also: have the leading role in) a new attempt to enter Melilla” (*Decenas de inmigrantes protagonizan un nuevo intento de entrada a Melilla*). Standfirsts, on the other hand, provide a description of the events such as the number of migrants who succeeded (21) in the attempt and references to the places of the occurrences.



Infolibre.es, which publishes an archive picture (below), rather than focusing on the current event in Melilla, in both headline and standfirsts reports that 14 NGOs have denounced the illegal forced returns of migrants by the Spanish government at the Melilla and Ceuta borders to the European Commission in Brussels.



Death of migrants at the Ceuta border: The beach of El Tarajal (Table 2, 8)

The first two images below here are video first frames from *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es*, respectively, while the last two are news pictures from *eldiario.es* and *infolibre.es*. All the visuals refer to the events that occurred near the Ceuta's beaches on 6th February 2014, when nine migrants drowned in the attempt to cross the border by swimming – this news event has already been mentioned in this chapter (page 172) and discussed in the Literature Review (page 44). With the exception of the third image (*eldiario.es*), where an indistinct line of migrants is represented beyond the fence, the police and the Ceuta border fence are the main subjects of these representations.

From a narrative perspective, however, what is particularly interesting is the video content of the two traditional news media. In *elmundo.es*, only the environmental audio is available and the video footage documents the police dinghy searching for other possible migrants' bodies at sea (as in the fourth picture). In contrast, *elpais.com*'s video audio, which narrates the police search at sea, tells us that “the water is not deep, just up to the waist, and there is also a good sea, but the human avalanche cause(d) the tragedy” (*la profundidad es poca, apenas hasta la cintura, y además hay buena mar pero la avalancha humana provoca la tragedia*). Immediately after emphasising that migrants caused their own death, as they were a crowd of about 300 people in the water, the video audio moves to an interview with a member of the *Cruz Roja*, whose account is: “We don't have words to express the sorrow that can be felt over this type of situation” (*No tenemos palabras para expresar el dolor que se puede sentir en este tipo de situación*). As a result, the narrative of *elpais.com* relegated the role of migrants to that of mere bodies – the nine corpses already retrieved from the sea and the ones that the police was still searching for – and naive people, who were responsible themselves for this tragic ‘incident’. On the other hand, representatives of the Spanish government such as border guards and members of the *Cruz Roja* were portrayed as active and careful actors.





Migrant rescue at sea: Salvamento Marítimo (Table 2, 24)

These three news pictures are from *elpais.com*, *elmundo.es*, and *eldiario.es*, respectively. The third of them is an archive picture, as stated in its caption. The circumstances of this rescue operation were tragic: about 29 people – seven of them were babies – out of the 57 travelling on a small boat through the Strait of Gibraltar disappeared into the water after almost two days at sea without petrol. All three images emphasise the care and professionalism of the rescuers as well as the police.





4.3 Interviews with journalists

The analysis of the Italian and Spanish news coverage of migrant border crossings has demonstrated that migration from northern Africa to Europe is reported by adopting a war narrative. In the news items about the crossings of the Mediterranean Sea, migrants are represented as people fleeing the war in their own country, although an in-depth analysis of such a migratory context is not provided. Furthermore, the continuous reproduction of politicians' statements addressing the migration phenomenon in terms of a 'fight against traffickers' reinforces the idea of a need for military intervention at sea and makes migrants appear as if they were victims of war in all respects. On the other hand, the news narratives about the migrant crossings of the terrestrial Morocco-Spain border which were produced by both the Italian and Spanish news media represent migrants in their struggle to fight the police forces that try to prevent them from climbing the border fences. Finally, at sea, in the Strait of Gibraltar, migrants are just helpless people, sometimes victims of the human trafficking trade, who wait to be rescued.

As a result, these representations of migrants and migrant border crossings have nourished an overall war-like narrative in Italian and Spanish online news media⁵⁸ and the continuous reproduction of visual materials about scenes of migrant suffering such as those referring to the crossings of the Mediterranean Sea has had an emotionally strong impact on public opinion (González-Enríquez 2010; Domínguez et al. 2014; De-Andrés et al. 2016).

⁵⁸ The idea of war-like narratives will be discussed in a further chapter, which will be entirely dedicated to the investigation of meanings in news about migrant border crossings.

Although this may lead audiences to emphasise with migrants and experience feelings like compassion or indignation, an emotional engagement with the news does not necessarily imply that readers understand what is represented there (Zelizer 2010). Actually, it may even trigger a process of desensitization to human suffering (Zelizer 2010; see also Hernández 2014), particularly because the remoteness of the occurrences prevents audiences from feeling physically and psychologically connected to the sufferers (Chouliaraki 2006; Joye 2009).

Overall, discussing news about migrant border crossings as war-like narratives is consistent with the way in which war is mainly fought nowadays: by means of political and economic strategies at and across the borders, without the need for military actions, and with the purpose of degrading, rather than destroying, the enemy (Andreas 2003; Montanari 2004; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). In this scenario, news media are expected to be the actors conveying both political discourse about, and rationale behind, governments' actions (Montanari 2004). However, the journalists who were interviewed for the purposes of this research showed themselves to be dissociated from the war-like narrative springing from the news. In fact, although journalists' knowledge and understanding of the migration phenomenon undeniably emerged during the interviews, the same cannot be said for their awareness of the news messages that they disseminate.

In this final section of the Data Analysis chapter, the analysis of 10 in-depth and semi-structured interviews with Italian and Spanish journalists, conducted from April to August 2016, will draw attention to what has been

identified here as a 'communicative gap'. This gap signals the distance between journalists' knowledge of the contexts of migrant movement across the African countries and of the conditions in which migrants live at the border and what news narratives actually tell about migration and, particularly, migrant border crossings.

Within this 'communicative gap', the analysis of journalistic practice will highlight what lies at the root of news narratives about migrant border crossings. While examining the reporting of such news events, in fact, the role of news sources and the process of selection of images and videos as well as the insertion of hyperlink content within online news articles will emerge as crucial to the representation of migrants 'at the border'.

From this perspective, the work of journalists in four Italian and four Spanish online news media will be compared in two distinct subsections: the first, about news reporting practices and, the second, about visual materials and hyperlinks' usage in online news. Journalists were not asked to reflect about their perception of the news representation of migrants; nevertheless, while discussing about the professional practices of news reporting, in some cases they engaged in a discussion about whether news media may actually challenge current policies and political viewpoints on migration – journalists' personal opinion about the matter will be reported throughout this and the next chapter.

In sum, the next two subsections will discuss the journalists' professional viewpoint about both their work and the role of news media in the dissemination of knowledge about migrant border crossings. In the next chapter then, further

passages from the interviews will be reported to discuss role perceptions of journalists within a more theoretical framework.

4.3.1 *Journalistic routines and practices*

In traditional online news media, a number of journalists are involved in the reporting of news events about migration, with a sharp distinction between national and international news coverage. In digital-born news media, on the other hand, only one or two journalists at a time deal with migration-related issues, and mainly by relying on news agencies' press releases⁵⁹. Therefore, for each of the four traditional online news media investigated here, two interviews with journalists with different levels of experience and expertise were conducted. As explained in the Methodology, however, in the case of the Italian and Spanish digital-born news media, it was possible to arrange only two interviews in total, one with an Italian and one with a Spanish journalist.

To begin with, the working practices of Italian and Spanish journalists are essentially the same. Nevertheless, their news coverage of migrant border crossings springs from two distinct journalistic perspectives on migration, which are related to the differences between the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders as well as the two migratory contexts. Indeed, from the very beginning of the interviews, the Italian journalists tailored their answers to the repetitiveness of the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean Sea and how this

⁵⁹ The complexity of the traditional news media narrative structures in contrast with the linearity of the digital-born ones was also underlined in the 10 Tables which were designed for the first section, the Data Presentation.

influences news coverage by referring to those crossings in terms of a 'humanitarian crisis' (Hamood 2008; Dines et al. 2015), as the 'tragedies' (*tragedie*) which have become 'habitual' (*una consuetudine*) in the public eye.

The Spanish journalists, on the other hand, showed an in-depth understanding of the political implications related to the Morocco-Spain border management at both a national and a European level – as discussed by Ferrer-Gallardo (2008) and Casas-Cortes et al. (2012) – and criticised the Spanish government intervention in Morocco⁶⁰. They also outlined what the Morocco-Spain border is physically and the process of its reinforcement for political purposes in the past (see also White 2007; Calderón Vásquez 2014). In sum, the differences between the Italian and Spanish journalists' perspectives here highlight that a crucial factor in news narratives about migrant border crossings is indeed the border itself.

Furthermore, in the case of the Italian journalists⁶¹, interviews mainly focused on the need not to be repetitive and journalists' 'skill' (*bravura*) was identified as the key. Nevertheless, "the danger of telling stories in which the public may not be interested any more" was seen as a very real one. After

⁶⁰ In one of these interviews, Morocco was defined as 'the gendarme of South Spain' (*Marruecos es nuestro gendarme del Sur*).

⁶¹ Four out of the five interviews with Italian journalists were arranged during the International Journalism Festival, which was held in Perugia, Italy, from the 6th to the 10th April 2016. The website of the event is: <http://www.journalismfestival.com/programme/2016>. The fifth interview was made via Skype.

saying, “this may stop readers from buying the newspaper”⁶², one of the journalists added:

“...we cannot forget that newspapers have to be sold... And if we (as journalists) often mistake our logics when we shout headlines to have the newspaper sold, it is also true that the public gets bored (...) We have to select pieces of news every day and the key is there... If you have a migrant story for four days in a row, the fifth day the newspaper will not publish it... acting as idealists is useless... we can do it, but that is it! This is the business...”⁶³.

On the other hand, the four interviews with Spanish journalists⁶⁴ drew particular attention to the contrast between news narrative and journalists' direct knowledge of the political implications and of the migrant rights violations at the Melilla and Ceuta border. When, at the end of an interview, such a contrast was

⁶² Due to their several year experience in traditional news media, three out of the four Italian journalists working at *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* – also publishing in the paper editions of the two news media – referred to themselves as ‘press journalists’. This emerged also from the fragment of the interview that has been reported here, whose original quote reads: “*Il pericolo è anche di raccontare poi delle storie che a un certo punto non interessano più il pubblico, che quindi smette di comprare il giornale*”.

⁶³ This passage merges two consecutive moments of the interview. The transcription of these two parts is: “*...noi non dobbiamo dimenticare che i giornali comunque devono essere comprati... e se noi spesso sbagliamo le nostre logiche perché facciamo i titoli strillati per essere venduti, però è vero anche che il pubblico si stanca (...) dobbiamo fare una selezione tutti i giorni delle notizie, e la chiave sta lì... Quando tu hai per quattro giorni di seguito una storia di un migrante, il quinto giorno... il giornale non te la mette più... è inutile fare gli idealisti... lo possiamo fare, ma è così... questo è il business...*”.

⁶⁴ All the interviews were arranged in Madrid between June and July 2016. Except for one of them, which was arranged in a public place, they were conducted in the journalists' newsrooms.

openly mentioned to a senior editor⁶⁵, he/she observed that it is the use of official sources, which have always to be reported in the news⁶⁶, that affects the overall news communication. The aim of the current subsection, therefore, is to show how journalistic practices and routines are crucial to the news representation of migrants and compare the Italian and Spanish news narrative choices in the coverage of migrant border crossings.

In this regard, seven out of the 10 journalists who were interviewed explicitly agreed that specific working routines for the news coverage of the crossings were consolidated between 2013 and 2015 (see the 'Summary', page 207). The only Italian journalist who was in disagreement⁶⁷ explained that his/her work outside the newsroom as an investigative journalist made his/her reporting "migrant story-focused" and thus not affected by the rising number of

⁶⁵ The recording of the interview had just ended and the journalist was leaving the room. He/she made the comment, which was noted on paper, whilst nodding and smiling.

⁶⁶ About this matter, it is worth reporting here that, in the same newsroom, another journalist stated that the journalistic "procedure" at *elpais.com* is "always to follow national and international official authorities' statements" (*prassi di seguire sempre le autorità ufficiali*), since "the flux of information" about migrant border crossings "is so massive that it is difficult (for us) to check it independently" (*il flusso d'informazione su tutta questa storia è così ampio e costante e allo stesso tempo così difficile per noi da mettere in pratica una sorta di comprobación autónoma*). This interview was conducted in Italian.

⁶⁷ As well, only one Spanish journalist disagreed with the perspective. According to his/her journalistic experience, there are "three 'models' (*modelos*) of migrant border crossing, which are more or less standard" (*tres modelos más o menos estándar de cruce de la frontera*). They are, as follows: the climbing of the border fence, the sea crossing on *pateras*, and 'singular events' (*modelos singulares*), as a migrant who is found hidden underneath car seats, for instance. From these considerations, however, it can be observed that the definition of *modelos* helps the journalist deal with the news coverage of migrant border crossings and, therefore, may define structured working routines.

similar news events⁶⁸. Apart from this journalist, who claimed to rely on his/her own sources, throughout conversation all the others highlighted the considerable influence that news agencies have over news production, in terms of textual and visual contents, as well as their weight in journalism practice.

As also the 'Summary' (below) demonstrates, when journalists talk about their working routines, they tend to start by mentioning the way they source the news. Although official sources such as national and supranational institutions as well as the police and governmental rescue organisations are their first references (Carlson and Franklin 2011), journalists say that they seek information also from non-elite sources such as NGOs and civil organisations. According to Fenton (2010), journalistic communication is increasingly drawing from non-elite sources as the news content that they offer has reached professional standards. However, in the case of the news about migrant border crossings, it is worth considering that NGOs such as Doctors without Borders are often the only possible source of information in the field – for instance, as rescuers in the Mediterranean – and represent those who are actually in contact with migrants.

⁶⁸ An analogous observation about investigative journalism was made by a Spanish journalist, although he/she confirmed the consolidation of specific working routines in the reporting of migration in the last few years. Both journalists also observed that “news coverage (about migration) is made of peaks of interest” (*el tratamiento informativo tiene picos de interés*) and this contributes to the periodic changing of journalistic practices.

Summary: Answers to the opening research question⁶⁹

Interviewees	In the last few years, have specific working routines been developed in order to deal with recurring news about migrant border crossings?	Reason given
<i>repubblica.it</i>	Yes, sure.	A consistent network of news sources, including social media, has been developed.
<i>repubblica.it</i>	Yes.	It is important to employ numbers correctly – they have to be contextualised – and pay attention to the use of language.
<i>corriere.it</i>	Yes.	Since the migratory phenomenon has recently expanded, international news sources have been introduced.
<i>corriere.it</i>	I don't know. I don't work within the newsroom.	Routines can flatten news stories.
<i>lettera43.it</i>	I think so, but it has not been planned.	It happened because such events started occurring frequently.
<i>elpais.com</i>	Yes.	Due to the repetition of practices, a certain automatism has been developed, for instance in the use of official news sources.
<i>elpais.com</i>	No.	Each occurrence maintains its distinctiveness (see footnote 67).
<i>elmundo.es</i>	No straight answer.	Digression to talk about quality journalism.
<i>elmundo.es</i>	I think so.	Since the flows of migrants have recently increased, the work of one or two journalists within the newsroom is now dedicated to the coverage of international news about immigration.
<i>infolibre.es</i>	No straight answer.	Economic resources are not available to cover these occurrences in-depth; their reporting is based on second-hand information.

In one Spanish journalist's own words, news agencies are 'journalists' eyes' (*son tus ojos* – literally, 'they are your eyes'). When a news location cannot be reached easily, journalists 'have to trust' (*tiene que fiarte*) press

⁶⁹ Although the same research themes were discussed with the 10 journalists, a summary of their answers can be presented by means of a structured table only in the case of the first research question, as this was put to all the interviewees in the same way. Since interviews were semi-structured, in fact, in some cases answers emerged from conversation, with no need to actually pose questions; in others, when questions were stated, answers might refer to just what was said and they could not be reported without their context. As a result, it would not be possible to compare interview answers by putting one next to another in a table as can be done in the case of the opening research question.

agencies such as Reuters and FrancePress, which act as ‘informants’ (*avisadores*). News agencies are ‘fundamental’ (*fundamentales*) to journalistic work as they can gather news material from local agencies and freelancers in timely fashion; ultimately, they replace the correspondents who news media cannot afford (Llorens 2010; Llorens 2011 et al. 2011).

Nevertheless, news agencies are not the only sources of information and audio-video material for desk journalists. In the traditional Italian news media, journalists’ attention to the events is important for the selection of news sources⁷⁰. For instance, the constant presence at the Libya-Italy border and the privileged relationships with migrants by NGOs and human rights organisations make them play a primary role as news sources. In this regard, the journalists interviewed talked about them as both ‘official and traditional sources’ (*fonti ufficiali; fonti classiche*). Likewise, for the Spanish journalists, “nowadays (NGOs and human rights organisations) work as special correspondents”⁷¹.

At *elpais.com*, however, journalists are particularly careful when dealing with human rights organisations, which are considered trustworthy as much as they are manipulative⁷². For instance, a humanitarian organisation such as Doctors without Borders (MSF) that, in journalists’ own words, has an

⁷⁰ About this matter, an Italian journalist said: “*É una selezione naturale e moltissimo conta l’attenzione del giornalista*”, which can be translated, as follows: “It is a natural (process of) selection and journalist’s attention matters indeed”. The journalist then gave the example of the emerging role of an NGO at the Greek border. He/she said to have observed the development of this organisation for months before finally contacting it and employed it as a news source for his/her reporting.

⁷¹ The original sentence is: “*Hoy día, ellos están cumpliendo el papel de enviados especiales*”.

⁷² The journalist literally said: “*Hay muy serias, hay muy manipuladoras*”, which can be translated as: “There are very serious and very manipulative (agencies)”.

‘incomparable’ (*ineguagliabile*) reputation, it is not worth a headline⁷³ of their news coverage. Journalists working at *elpais.com*, in fact, share and follow an editorial principle according to which official sources such as the Spanish *Guardia Civil* should be ‘the main pillar’ (*el pilastro fondamentale*) of news reporting. At *elmundo.es*, on the other hand, one of the two journalists expressed his/her opinion otherwise: since “(European) governments are not in the field, they cannot provide direct information”⁷⁴ about the events occurring at the border. According to him/her, NGOs and human rights organisations are, therefore, primary sources on a scale of preference, immediately after migrants themselves.

As news agencies are an important economic matter for news media organisations and in particular for digital-born news media, which have limited economic resources, NGOs and humanitarian organisations sometimes act as professional substitutes for news sourcing (Domingo and Le Cam 2014; Ihlen et al. 2015). However, according to the Italian journalist working at *lettera43.it*, these organisations tend to provide timely information only to news outlets that have gained a widespread prestige and are reluctant to do the same for minor media organisations.

⁷³ The original quote from the interview is: “...non andremo con un titolo... con un dato che offre MSF o peggio con quello di ONG che hanno meno prestigio a livello internazionale... ciò non toglie poi che dentro l’informazione non (vi) si possa far riferimento come fonte, come una fonte ulteriore”. Its translation is: “...we would not go with a headline... with a fact given by MSF or worse (a fact) provided by NGOs with less prestige at an international level. This does not mean, however, that in the news such a source cannot be referred to as an additional source”.

⁷⁴ The transcription from the interview reads: “Los gobiernos no están y por lo tanto no tienen una información directa del terreno”.

The Italian as well as the Spanish journalist working at the digital-born *lettera43.it* and *infolibre.es* confirmed that they have limited access to news agencies also due to internal economic difficulties. For the Spanish, the news is therefore incomplete, a sort of 'second-hand information' (*información de segunda mano*). On the other hand, the Italian journalist said the following about NGOs and human rights organisations,:

“MSF is unapproachable (...) They do not answer (the phone), I had to call them back, their press office snubs you... they are snobs! ...but this happened also with UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)... I call them, (I tell them that) I represent an online news medium, and they say 'We will give you an interview in four days', then I notice that they have already given it to *repubblica.it*...”⁷⁵.

For this journalist, the only way to be competitive in the online news media market is to be able to deliver the news within half-hour after an *ansa*⁷⁶ is released and supplemented by a quick search on *Google*. A more in-depth news article, based on at least two phone calls and additional research online, including a look at national and international news media, may then be published the following day. For the Spanish journalist, in contrast, the best way to replace the lack of information due to *infolibre.es*' scarcity of news agencies

⁷⁵ The original interview's fragment is: “*Non mi hanno risposto, ho dovuto richiamare, l'ufficio stampa ti snobba... cioè sono snob! MSF è inavvicinabile... ma è questo mi è capitato anche con AIME... lo chiamo, sono un giornale online, e loro mi dicono 'Tra quattro giorni concediamo l'intervista, poi vedo che su Repubblica online l'hanno data subito'.*”

⁷⁶ ANSA is an acronym for 'Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata', which is the most important news agency in Italy (see also Czarniawska 2012). Italian journalists commonly use this acronym as a noun, *ansa*, to refer to the news agency releases and to imply that such releases are what all news media have about a news event at a given time.

and unavailability of correspondents in the field is to provide opinionated articles by involving, for instance, academics with specific expertise in migration-related issues. Otherwise, “we are not able to tackle the subject in-depth”⁷⁷.

Indeed, in the context of news articles about migrant border crossing, the role of news sources seemed to suggest that journalists acted more as a vehicle for others' discourses than as active participants in the societal scene. For this reason, aspects of journalism practice concerning the role perception and function of journalists within society will be deepened and discussed in the next chapter.

On the other hand, as highlighted in the previous section, the use of the expression *sin papeles* (without documents) marked a distance between the news narrative of traditional and independent online news media. Therefore, during the interviews with Spanish journalists, the use of this particular expression was explored. It emerged that, although there may be editorial guidelines about the vocabulary to be employed when referring to migrants, journalists' personal standpoints can still determine how the news is reported.

According to a journalist with twenty years experience in traditional news media and currently working in a digital-born news medium, *El País* is the newspaper that, in Spain, “has shaped the journalistic writing style in the last thirty years”⁷⁸. This newspaper “established what was politically correct” (*situaba lo políticamente correcto*), even how to formalise the spelling of towns'

⁷⁷ The transcript from the interview is the following: “*Nosotros no tenemos capacidad de abordar el tema en profundidad*”.

⁷⁸ In this journalists' own words: “*El País marcó el estilo periodístico en los últimos treinta años*”.

names, and this applies to the migration context as well. According to this journalist:

“[In *El País'* style book (libro de estilo) it is written that] it is not allowed to define an immigrant as 'illegal' – people are not illegal – and to write *sin papeles* as well⁷⁹. If journalists do it, they should clearly explain what *sin papeles* means⁸⁰. In this, there is a kind of code that we, as a small news medium, do not have. We do not have a style book, (but) we pay attention to language. It is a general consensus among journalists; we always try to write *migrante* (migrant). It is part of the agreement within our journalistic project⁸¹.

On the other hand, the interviews at *elpais.com* indicated a striking contrast between what two journalists with different roles, one national and one foreign senior editor, can reveal over the usage of the expression *sin papeles*. According to the first, the use of this expression is a personal choice. He/she

⁷⁹ The last edition of *El País'* style book is dated 2014, when it was released as a multimedia editorial product. Information about the style book release can be found at the following link: http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2014/05/10/actualidad/1399739605_201787.html. For free, the edition published in 1996 is available online at: <http://blogs.elpais.com/files/manual-de-estilo-de-el-pa%C3%As.pdf>. However, in it there is no reference to the expression *sin papeles*. This fact can be seen as an evidence of the changes occurring in journalistic language over time.

⁸⁰ In the previous section, the analysis has shown that in *elpais.com*'s news articles the expression *sin papeles* is not followed by any clarification. Rather, sometimes it can be found in inverted commas.

⁸¹ The original quote from the interview is: “...no se puede decir inmigrantes ilegales... una persona no es ilegal... no se puede decir 'sin papeles', y si lo dices hay que explicarlo bien... en este hay un cierto código, que nosotros, un medio pequeño, no tenemos. No tenemos un libro de estilo, intentamos cuidar el lenguaje. (...) es un consenso de espíritu de grupo de periodistas... intentamos de decir siempre 'migrante'... forma parte del consenso de nuestro proyecto periodístico”.

said that he/she had fought against the 'illegal migration discourse' (Leach and Zamora 2006; De Genova 2013) for years together with other colleagues, as “immigration is natural in human life”, and remarked that *sin papeles* is an adequate definition, “since I know that an immigrant comes here without a passport”⁸². He/she then clarified:

“I like *sin papeles*, I think it is the right expression because... we cannot make distinctions, but we actually have to... because we have to play in a 'real' world, in which migration is natural in human life, but also in an 'official' world, where classifications exist according to the fact that you came with ID (or not), you crossed the border regularly (or not), and I have to make distinctions sometimes”⁸³.

The journalist continued discussing the vocabulary employed by journalists to refer to migrants and explained: *un indocumentado*⁸⁴ (an undocumented), in Spanish, is someone who does not know, a stupid person – if used to describe a migrant, this definition is incorrect. *Un inmigrante irregular* (an irregular migrant), on the other hand, seems to refer to a *deforme* (deformed) person. *Sin papeles*, therefore, is ‘the most descriptive’ (*lo más descriptivo*) expression. He/she then mentioned other words which can be

⁸² This excerpt from the interview reads here: “*La inmigración es en el movimiento natural del ser humano*”, and then continues: “...*porque yo sé que un inmigrante llega aquí sin pasaport*”.

⁸³ Here, the original quote is, as follows: “*A mi me gusta la expresión sin papeles... para mi es correcta porque... no se pueden hacer distinciones, pero en realidad si... porque nosotros tenemos que jugar en un mundo real en que la migración es un movimiento natural del hombre pero también con un mundo oficial, en el que existe una clasificación “en función” de si tienes un documento, si has entrado por una frontera regular... y yo tengo que distinguir a veces*”.

⁸⁴ The comparison between news items in the previous section has highlighted that this expression is commonly used in *elmundo.es*' news articles.

found in Spanish news articles about migrant border crossings such as *asalto* (assault) and *asedio* (siege):

“I did not like them, they seemed very medieval to me... *salto* (jump) is too 'clean' for my taste but I used it, although ONGs said to me that they were not *saltos* (pl.) and I replied: 'Thus, tell me how I should refer to them!'... It is a long lasting quarrel the one over the expressions to be used to refer to immigration (...) It is too theoretical a matter”⁸⁵.

In contrast, about the use of *sin papeles* the foreign senior journalist firmly stated:

“We do not employ this expression. In foreign news, we use words such as *migrantes* (migrants), when we cannot be certain of who the migrants on the boat or on the beach are... if they are economic migrants or asylum seekers... or just 'refugees'... (words such as *sin papeles* and) *irregulares* as well are banished. We do not use them as we do not accept them. (...) but I think that in the national news department, journalists utilise them. Paradoxically, I can speak better about how *The New York Times* covers migration than how our national news department does. I do not have time to...”⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ This brief passage from the interview sheds light on the distance between theory and practice in journalistic writing. The original quote states: “*A mi no me gustaba porque me parecía muy medieval. Salto es demasiado limpio para mi gustos... pero yo utilizaba salto, incluso ha habido ONG que me decían que este no eran saltos y yo le decía 'pues ya me direás como los puedo llamar'. Es una pelea larga esta, que expresiones se utilizan para referirse a la inmigración (...) es una tema demasiado teorico*”.

⁸⁶ This passage from the interview is particularly interesting at least for two reasons: firstly, it shows the existence of communicative and procedural gaps within the newsroom. Secondly, this journalist's mother tongue is not Spanish and this may be the reason why he/she did not linger over the meaning of Spanish words referring to migrants but rather focused on the

On the other hand, for the journalists working at *elmundo.es*, the expression *sin papeles* refers to an administrative requirement, to the ID attesting the ‘regularity or legality’ (*de forma regular o legal*) of someone's presence in Spain⁸⁷. Both journalists, however, affirmed that such an expression was employed especially in the past. Nowadays, the word *refugiados* (refugees) is much more frequent since it ‘really defines’ (*define realmente*) the living situations of the migrants “trying to reach the West to have a more or less regular and stable life” (*intentan llegar a Occidente para tener una vida más o menos regular o estable*). About the use of the word ‘refugees’, one of the two journalists recalled:

implications that those words have in a wider political context. The original quote is, as follows: “*Noi non la utilizziamo questa espressione. Le nostre terminologie, negli Esteri, sono: migrantes, quando non abbiamo chiaro se chi è sulla barca o sulla spiaggia... sono economici o asylum seekers... o sennò direttamente rifugiati... (...) e irregulares, queste cose qua, sono desterrate (from desterrar, speaking mistake), non si ricorre a questa cosa qua perché non l'accettiamo... però secondo me gli Interni a volte lo usano. Paradossalmente io ti so parlare meglio di come lo tratta il New York Times che come lo trattano gli Interni... non ho tempo di...*”.

⁸⁷ To illustrate what *papel* (paper, document) means at an administrative level, the journalist employed an example that may be debatable: “The *paper* is something that is accompanied by your own ID, it is a paper certifying that your name is X and that you have the permit to live in Spain... and this was like a sheet of paper, a paper. (...) The concept of *sin papeles* comes from there... ‘They did not have the papers’, it is like when in the war movies and about this matter, when there was Hitler – if you want to paraphrase it... Jews were stopped in the street and asked whether they had *the document (el papel)* and what they showed was a *sheet of paper (un papel)*”. The literal translation of this passage is: “*El papel es un hecho que acompaña a tu propio documento como tál, es un papel que dice que tu te llamas X y que tienes el permiso para residir en España... y eso era como una hoja, un papel (...)* De allí viene el concepto de *sin papeles*... ‘No tenían los papeles’, es como cuando en las películas de los alemanes y este tipo de cuestión en la época de Hitler, si quiere trasladarlo de una forma... paraban a los judíos en la calle y le pedían si tenían el papel y lo que enseñaba el judío era un papel”.

“In Spain, last year (2015), in the spring, there was nobody, no minister, no politician, speaking of 'refugees': the word was 'immigrants'... because no one wanted to accept... because the fact that they are refugees legally binds (Spain) to follow asylum protocols and they did not want to commit themselves to that and everybody spoke of 'immigrants'. Angela Merkel was the one who started speaking of 'refugees' clearly (...) I remember that I was on holiday at the end of August (2015), when everybody said 'immigrants'... when I got back to work, (migrants) were already all 'refugees', in fifteen days! What had happened?”⁸⁸

From this perspective, it is worth observing that also the foreign news journalist at *elpais.com* ascribed a crucial role to the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, in the refugee crisis in late summer 2015. He/she stated that, at that time, the narrative about migration ‘changed direction’ (*c’è una virata*) and it moved from *willkommen kultur* (welcome culture) to *border control* (lit. controlling the (EU's) doors, *controllare le porte*). In other words, since then immigration “was not an internal affair any more, as everything turned into: 'Keep [migrants] out!’”⁸⁹.

⁸⁸ The original passage from the interview is: “*En España, durante el año pasado, en primavera, nadie, ningun ministro, ningun político hablaba de refugiados, se hablaba de 'inmigrantes'... porque nadie quería aceptar... porque el hecho que son refugiados obliga legalmente a iniciar un protocolo de asilo y por tanto nadie quería comprometerse a eso y todo el mundo hablaba de 'inmigrantes'... fue Angela Merkel la que empezó a hablar claramente de refugiados... (...) recuerdo que fui de vacaciones en el final de agosto, septiembre, cuando todo el mundo hablaba de inmigrantes... cuando llegué ya eran todos refugiados, en quince días... qué ha pasado?*”.

⁸⁹ The translation of this quote is: “*Non è più una cosa interna perché tutto si converte in 'Tenerli fuori!'*”.

4.3.2 Visual representation and hyperlink contexts

When interview questions moved from news narratives to visual choices, the Italian journalists working at *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* promptly highlighted how team work and deadlines are decisive. Within their newsrooms, news images and videos are chosen together with senior editors and visual specialists. There are frequent debates and the main guideline is to avoid showing 'disturbing' (*disturbanti*) images – the same approach is adopted at *elpais.com*, according to Spanish journalists. However, choices have to be made quickly due to the spread of images on social media and this "is a mechanism which is every day faster"⁹⁰, 'quite a chain effect' (*un effetto anche abbastanza a catena*):

"Unfortunately, speed very often forces you to make choices (...) it may be that the thinking (behind these choices) is done in just a few minutes... (it is) every day more difficult... it is in front of everyone's eyes..."⁹¹.

About the "not to publish 'tough pictures'⁹² (*immagini dure*) guideline", which he/she considered 'reductive' (*riduttiva*), another Italian journalist expressed clear irritation:

⁹⁰ In Italian, this sentence reads: "...è un meccanismo che è sempre più veloce".

⁹¹ This passage is indicative of the journalist's sense of embarrassment of the practice under discussion. The original quote is: "*Purtroppo... allora la velocità ti costringe molto spesso a... fare delle scelte che non... che hanno dietro un ragionamento ma che magari è un ragionamento che viene fatto veramente in pochi minuti... questo rende sempre più difficile, è sotto gli occhi di tutti, fare delle scelte... diverse, anche...*".

⁹² Overall, when talking about 'tough pictures', the journalists interviewed made reference to the portrayal of Aylan Kurdi's body on a Turkish shore. The picture, which was taken in early September 2015, had a strong effect on public opinion as well as journalistic reporting from the

“I personally think that I would slam all those images in people's faces... because I see them and I cry... thus it would be right that (those pictures) make people cry too!”⁹³.

Furthermore, while comparing *repubblica.it* with *elpais.com*, the same journalist observed how the former was ‘more advanced’ (*più avanti*) from a visual viewpoint as well as in terms of ‘flexibility in reporting the news’ (*flessibilità nel riportare una notizia*):

“Today the news is what you can click from your tablet, from a picture, (and) see a video... this is crucial. (In *repubblica.it*, for instance) I can build a news webpage that is made of seventy per cent pictures and thirty per cent text. *Elpais.com*'s graphics design cannot do this. Rather, it is very old style”⁹⁴.

The interviews at *elpais.com*, however, stressed how the development of the audio-visual sector was a major priority nowadays. One of the two Spanish journalists remarked how actually “if a story can be told through a video, (we) prefer to use a video rather than a picture”⁹⁵. Likewise, about news videos, an

European borders (De-Andrés et al. 2016). However, as journalists themselves explained in interview, such an effect did last only a few months.

⁹³ The original quote from the interview is: “*Io personalmente penso che gliela sbatterei in faccia tutte queste immagini alla faccia della gente... perché io le vedo e mi metto a piangere... quindi è giusto che facciano piangere anche la gente!*”.

⁹⁴ This quote is significant especially in comparison with some passages from journalists' interviews at *elpais.com*, which will be reported on further. Its transcription is: “*Una notizia oggi è quella che io dal tablet, da una foto riesco a... cliccare, a vedere il video, è fondamentale... (in questo la grafica di Repubblica, per esempio) mi consente di fare una pagina che è composta al 70 per cento da fotografie e dal 30 per cento da testo... la grafica de El País questa cosa non la fa, anzi è molto vecchio stile...*”.

⁹⁵ The original quote is: “*Se una storia può essere raccontata con un video, preferiamo andare con il video che con la foto*”.

Italian journalist explained that, “at this time, videos go down very well as they invite (users) to click and thus attract money”⁹⁶. Furthermore, within the Spanish news media context, it was observed that the migrant crossing of the border in Melilla provides the most spectacular images:

“It is (the presence of) a spectacular image that determines the relevance of pieces of information (...) an image that is not spectacular can make the news irrelevant... (The visual representation of the climbing of the border fence in Melilla) is very spectacular because it is (a) very numerous, very visual (event), and it is very deceptive too! since it seems that Spain is harassed or laid siege to (by migrants) but this is not true... it is a very small (event) but it offers images which are very spectacular.”⁹⁷.

On spectacular images and click-bait⁹⁸ sharp comments were made by the two journalists working in independent online news media as well. The Spanish journalist criticised how journalists, 'we', 'have changed journalism' (*hemos convertido el periodismo*). Precisely to clarify this point, he/she used as an example the 'very powerful image of Africans' (*foto muy fuerte de africanos*)

⁹⁶ In Italian, this excerpt is: “*Il video in questo momento va moltissimo perché attira click e quindi soldi*”.

⁹⁷ The quote from the interview is: “*Realmente una imagen espectacular puede condicionar que se haga una información que quizás no sea relevante... a revés, una imagen no espectacular puede convertir en irrelevante la información... (el salto de la valla) es muy espectacular porque es muy numeroso, es muy visual, y es muy engañoso porque parece como se España fuera acosada o asediada pero no es verdad... lo que pasa es que es muy pequeño... pero ofrece imágenes que son muy espectaculares...*”.

⁹⁸ During public discussions at the 'International Journalism Festival', held in Perugia in April 2016, journalists frequently mentioned the practice of click-bait, the making of more attractive news articles by inserting hyperlinks in sensationalist headlines and other news elements (Blom and Hansen 2015); they used also to define it as a widespread problem in journalism.

at the Melilla border and claimed that the publication of spectacular pictures has frozen migrant border crossings in an 'event category'. Such a practice has also contributed to the overall omission of the historical and socio-political contexts of immigration towards Spain from news narratives. In his/her words:

“...the main media succumbed to this journalistic culture (...) and the small media (did the same) as well, because we are not in the position to distance ourselves (from the main media), to make the difference...”⁹⁹.

On the other hand, the Italian journalist, who mainly focused his/her answers on the commercial aspect of the news production, remarked:

“In online media, unfortunately, disturbing images make (users) click... this is not our choice... it is the same thing as what happens with images of naked women... 'Money, Sex, and Blood'¹⁰⁰ gain clicks... (More than online competitors) we look at what makes (users) click on *Google*”¹⁰¹.

⁹⁹ This passage from the interview was transcribed as follows: “...*han caído los grandes medios en esta cultura periodística (...) y los medios pequeño también porque no tenemos capacidad como para desmarcarnos, como para marcar la diferencia con eso...*”.

¹⁰⁰ The translation cannot be literal here. The three words refer to the well-known Italian pun of the three-S: *Soldi, Sesso, Sangue*, which are considered the three most attractive elements of any news story. The riddle is so popular within newsrooms that a prominent Italian journalist used it as a title for one of his books, *'Sangue, Sesso, Soldi: Una controscoria d'Italia dal 1946 a oggi'* (Pansa 2013). Furthermore, in a manual of journalistic writing style (Salerno 2011), *money, sex, and blood* are mentioned as parts of 'the rule of the five-S' (p33), in which *sport* and *entertainment (spettacolo)* are also included, as the elements that were traditionally considered to make the news newsworthy – the idea is ridiculed and dismissed there. It is worth also noting that the pun here resonates with another cliché, “If it bleeds, it leads”, in American journalism.

¹⁰¹ The original quote here is, as follows: “*Nei media online, purtroppo, le foto disturbanti fanno click... una scelta che non è nostra... è la stessa cosa che accade con le immagini di donne*”.

Throughout the conversations, all the 10 interviews with journalists stressed the strong impact that economic issues have on the news, from the availability and richness of news sources to the use of images and videos as 'hooks' for selling the online news product. The interviews with the journalists working at *lettera43.it* and *infolibre.es* even confirmed that these two digital-born news platforms provide overall poor news content about migrant border crossings due to their limited economic resources, as Table 6 and Table 10 in the Data Presentation also demonstrate.

Finally, to conclude the analysis of the interviews, another important aspect of online news production such as the use of hyperlinks was examined together with the journalists. Academic literature has tended to stress the potential for the development of news narratives and news contexts through hyperlinks (De Maeyer 2012; Bednarek and Caple 2012). Nevertheless, the interviews with journalists have revealed that hyperlinks are not employed systematically in journalistic writing. At *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es*, for instance, there is no editorial guideline about their usage. As Spanish journalists have reported, hyperlinks are mainly entered by the editor checking the article just before publishing it, together with news tags and keywords for online search engine (SEO)¹⁰². At *infolibre.es*, on the other hand, where the variety of links in news articles is noteworthy, hyperlinks are not selected by journalists at all –

nude... Soldi Sesso e Sangue fanno click... (Invece che a quello che fanno gli altri) si guarda a cosa fa click su Google, piuttosto...".

¹⁰² In this regard, the journalist reported that the headlines of the news articles which are published on the website and in the newspaper may be different due to the word choice for online optimisation.

their insertion is an automated process. Although *infolibre.es* offers a broad overview of the news, links “are accumulated without too much thinking about which of them are really useful or appropriate for the news article”¹⁰³.

For the Italian online news media investigated here, instead, the matter is slightly different. Apart from *lettera43.it*, where journalists are expected to perform all the tasks concerning online publishing independently, and therefore also the insertion of hyperlinks in the news text, *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* have recently undergone a transformation in teamwork and newsroom structure¹⁰⁴ and this has inevitably redefined journalists' working practices. From this perspective, two Italian journalists with long experience as press journalists clarified:

“Links allow you to give things for granted¹⁰⁵. You put a link which brings you to another page... In the paper version (of the news article), obviously, you cannot do this, so you have to explain. When then you transfer the piece to the website... I try to do it (inserting hyperlinks) as much as possible but obviously...”.

¹⁰³ The original quote is: “*Se van acumulando sin pensar demasiado que links sean más convenientes o más oportunos para una noticia*”.

¹⁰⁴ At the beginning of 2016, *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* started integrating the press and the online newsrooms at an organisational as well as a spatial level.

¹⁰⁵ The literal translation of this expression, which in Italian is “*Il link ti permette di dare per scontate delle cose*”, may sound awkward in English. It implies that the main characteristic of hyperlinks is to expand the content of news articles. This thus means that journalists can take pieces of information 'for granted' within news texts, as these pieces can be accessed through hyperlink content. The further original excerpt from this first interview reads: “*... tu lo metti, ti rimanda a... sulla carta ovviamente questo non lo puoi fare quindi devi spiegare... quindi quando poi vai a trasferire il pezzo online... io cerco il più possibile di farlo però ovviamente...*”.

“(About contextualising the news) It depends on each of us, on how journalists work... I am one of those who love contextualising very much... others love it less... however, it is an individual choice (...) Online, we try to do it by employing links, for instance (...) if you want to deepen (the reading), you follow the link. And we make also another attempt, that is what it is but it is there, on *repubblica.it*: the 'To Know More' (section). (...) Often it is the same news article that is moved from the paper to the online edition. Because of the online layout, there is more work to do, you should prepare all the hyperlinks, so (...) It is up to you as an individual to write them into a Word document to be sent. This takes just a second but if, for each piece of writing, I have to send... I would need people... We all wish it was possible but not always...”¹⁰⁶

To conclude, what interviews have revealed about journalistic practices and routines is that the journalists authoring online news articles are not in control of the final news narratives, since both economic and practical factors affect the overall news production. Furthermore, traditional and independent online news media tend to convey news narratives which are similar in terms of written as well as visual communication. Journalists, in fact, need to deliver a news product which is competitive within the online news media market and time management constraints pressure them constantly.

¹⁰⁶ The passage from the second interview is: “*Dipende dal singolo giornalista, da come la persona lavora... lo sono una che ama molto contestualizzare, altri di meno... però è una questione di scelta personale (...) In internet cerchiamo di farlo mettendo magari un link (...) se vuoi andare ad approfondirti, vai là... e c'è anche un tentativo, che è un po' così, però c'è su Repubblica, il 'Per Saperne Di Più'... (...) Spesso è lo stesso testo che viene passato dal cartaceo a internet... però a quel punto per il lavoro, il layout di internet, è un lavoro in più... doversi andare a fare tutti i link ipertestuali, quindi... (...) Spetta a te come singola persona magari inserirli nel documento Word che stai mandando il link ipertestuale... ci vuole un secondo a inserirlo... ma se devo mandare per ogni pezzo... servirebbero delle persone... vorremmo tutti che fosse possibile ma non sempre...”.*

In the next chapter, the communicative gap between news narratives about migrant border crossings and journalists' expertise in migration-related issues will be explored. The current analysis of news items and interviews with journalists, in fact, has highlighted that what actually influences the production of news messages are the structure of online news and the working conditions of journalists. Indeed, online news is made of different elements such as texts, images, videos, audio recordings, and hyperlinks but it is also organised according to traditional journalistic practices concerning practices such as the selection of news sources and pictures – all processes that are accelerated in the online environment. As a result, the war-like narrative emerging from the analysis of news items seems not to be intentional. Rather, practices of online news production have highlighted that journalists are not fully in control of the news messages that they disseminate.

5.0 Journalistic performance and news production:

Challenges and contradictions

The analysis proposed in the previous chapter has demonstrated the existence of a 'communicative gap' between how migrants and migrant border crossings are represented in the news and what journalists actually think and know about migration-related issues. On one side, news narratives are built on the very same war-like language that politicians employ to debate about migration. On the other, journalists, who acknowledge the circumstances driving migrants to cross the Mediterranean Sea and the Morocco-Spain border in a personal capacity, are critical of governments' approach to the migratory flows. In addition, the analysis has revealed that news narratives depend more on the combination of diverse semiotic modes such as texts and images rather than journalists' intentions as authors of news articles. In particular, in the interviews, the answers of Italian and Spanish journalists to research questions about the news coverage of migrant border crossings have highlighted discrepancies between journalists' perceptions of their role and function within society and the news reporting that they produce.

This chapter will attempt to explain the reasons behind this 'communicative gap' in the news representation of migrants and migrant border crossings, which seems to depend on the distance between journalists' role perceptions and the enactment of journalism in the digital environment more broadly. News messages, in fact, have emerged as the result of the ways

journalists structure news content through diverse communicative means such as videos and hyperlinks and the weight of journalistic principles such as objectivity and accuracy, which seem to have been diminished in the contemporary process of the online news production.

In order to further explore this set of assertions, the next sections will look into Italian and Spanish journalists' accounts of thoughts about their function and the role of journalism within society as a whole. The occasions on which these journalists had the chance to openly reflect on their working practices and how these have adapted to the requirements of online news reporting were the research interviews conducted in Italy and Spain between April and August 2016 and the public talks given by a few Italian journalists at the International Journalism Festival 2016, which was held in Perugia, Italy, in April. By looking at the practices on which journalists themselves placed special emphasis in conversation and more formal presentations, it will be clarified here how the technical features of the Internet, which are integral parts of online news production, are nowadays changing the way journalists narrate the news and, ultimately, how they perceive themselves and their function within the news media sector.

5.1 Journalists' routines and principles

At an initial stage, the current study did not intend to consider the role perceptions of journalists in the context of online news production. Nevertheless, once the analysis of news items about migrant border crossings

and the interviews with journalists were completed and discrepancies between them were evidenced, investigation of role perception emerged as a necessary step to explain how the 'communicative gap' which is at the core of the news narratives about migrant border crossings was produced. It is worth pointing out, however, that journalists' dedication to such news reporting is beyond question here. Interviewees clearly showed strong commitment and high levels of expertise in migration. What is under discussion is rather a context of news production in which the repetition of similar news events such as migrant border crossings has resulted in the strengthening of practices such as the abundant use of official sources and 'spectacular' pictures.

In order to shed light on the role and professional attitudes of Italian and Spanish journalists at the current time, the answers to the research interviews that explored practices and routines in the coverage of news about migrant border crossings were re-examined by taking into account how journalists talked about themselves as well as the news more broadly. In addition, several public presentations of Italian journalists at the International Journalism Festival 2016 were considered as further sources of information in order to act as a counterpoint to the research data that had emerged from interviews¹⁰⁷.

The journalists here, who were first contacted via Twitter, were selected on the basis of their interest in migration-related issues, as stated in their public profiles on social media. As soon as they replied positively to the request for an interview, the meetings were arranged via e-mail and further conducted in public

¹⁰⁷ In particular, the interviews that were conducted with Italian journalists lasted, on average, about half the time of those with Spanish journalists due to journalists' working schedules.

places such as cafés (*repubblica.it*, *corriere.it*, and *elmundo.es*) and waiting rooms in conference buildings (*repubblica.it* and *corriere.it*) as well as within newsrooms, as in the case of the two interviews at *elpais.com* and the ones at *elmundo.es* and *infolibre.es*. The conversation with the journalist working at *lettera43.it* was instead conducted via Skype.

Although journalists across traditional and digital-born news media had tight availabilities, they were keen to discuss their practices and routines for research purposes. This allowed the interviews to bring to light the dynamism that is inherent in their daily work and, at the same time, some frustration from journalists, who continuously adapt their routines to the changing requirements of the online news production.

At the same time, journalists acknowledged that, overall, news stories about migrant border crossings share several similarities. As a result, the journalists who work in the newsrooms of the four Italian and Spanish traditional news media openly admitted that such a news reporting attempts to avoid the risk of boring their audiences. Furthermore, spectacular images as well as captivating headlines and videos are commonly employed to attract readers' attention. At the same time, such practices serve the increase of web-traffic on news media platforms. Indeed, as also reported in the previous chapter, editors tend to monitor online readers' behaviour and what news contents are shared via social media by means of web analytic tools in order to optimise processes of newsgathering and strategies of news communication, online as well as in the print version of traditional newspapers (Tandoc 2014; Murphy 2015).

In the interviews, journalists showed a certain discontent about practices

such as the use of sensationalist headlines and 'spectacular' pictures, although they also demonstrated an understanding of the economic reasons underlying such editorial choices and the commercial requirements of their news media organisations. Significantly, Pihl-Thingvad (2015) has encouraged us to think about commercialism in journalism as an emerging professional ideal. The majority of the journalists involved in her study showed that they were keen to provide 'a competitive product' in order to meet their news media outlets' needs in the current, highly competitive online media market. According to Pihl-Thingvad (2015), this suggests that, alongside traditional ideals such as objectivity and accuracy, "journalists have internalized (commercialism) as an essential part of their professional identity" (p405).

Research has demonstrated that journalists perceive themselves as members of a broader professional group, which is strengthened by common values and practices across countries (Zelizer 2005; Preston 2009; Hanitzsch 2011; Carlson 2016). This has also been confirmed by the interviews with Italian and Spanish journalists here, in which the interviewees tended to talk about themselves as a 'we', thus implying that they were members of a professional homogeneous group.

Research has also highlighted that newsrooms act as "internally cohesive professional communities" (García-Avilés 2014, p261), in which journalists tend to behave according to common principles and define their professionalism through the enactment of shared practices and decision-making processes. In this regard, it is worth observing that the participants in the current study did not call into question their individual role as an agency for

moderating the editorial choices on which they might disagree. Similarly, in the interviews as well as in the public presentations at the Perugia festival, Italian and Spanish journalists talked about themselves as an integral part of the news media for which they work and tended to appeal to journalistic practices such as balancing news sources in order to affirm the quality of their reporting.

From this perspective, the 'we' that journalists employ while referring to themselves as well as their colleagues across different news media organisations expresses a twofold meaning – 'we' as members of a professional group, and 'we' as members of specific newsrooms –, whose implications are virtually impossible to distinguish. Journalists also acknowledged that their work is always connected to and shared between colleagues with different skills and expertise. The selection of news pictures and videos, for instance, is performed by dedicated teams in traditional news media organisations such as *El País* and *El Mundo*, where more than a hundred professionals work within the same newsroom. There, decisions about visuals are made together with editors and according to editorial lines¹⁰⁸. In the case of hyperlinks, then, if journalists do not provide them, their insertion is decided autonomously by the editors reviewing news articles just before publication.

From this perspective, it can be noted how, overall, news structures and narratives are the result of the enactment of specific journalistic practices. As explicitly remarked by a senior Spanish journalist in the previous chapter, for

¹⁰⁸ In the case of the two digital-born news media considered in this study, journalists observed that, due to economic restrictions, the selection of visual news items was limited to those that did not require the payment of royalties or licence fees and it may also be performed by individual journalists.

instance, it is the dominant use of official sources which sets the tone for news articles about migrant border crossings. Furthermore, the Italian and Spanish journalists working in the four traditional news media considered here admitted in conversation that the use of news videos is crucial to online communication, since videos increase web-traffic and suit the technological devices such as tablets and smartphones on which the news is largely consumed nowadays.

In addition, the influence that political discourses have over the news representation of migrants in both Italian and Spanish news media, which has been discussed in several studies (among others, Ferrer-Gallardo 2008; Cuttitta 2014; Ricci 2015), seems here to depend on journalistic practices and routines. In this regard, when explicitly asked “whether the political leanings of their newspaper or news media organisation affected the production of news about migrant border crossing”, none of the journalists interviewed claimed that this has ever happened or that such news coverage has ever been subjected to any form of interference 'from above'. In contrast, what actually puts journalists under pressure, for their own admission, are time constraints and tight deadlines; these are also largely recognised by studies about the work of journalists in digital newsrooms across different countries (for instance, Doudaki and Spyridou 2013; Agarwal and Barthel 2015).

In order to demonstrate that practices are stronger than professional ideals in shaping online news narratives, particularly in a context that is characterised by the constant repetition of similar news events such as migrant border crossings, it is helpful to employ here the notion of journalistic ‘role performance’ that has been articulated by Ryfe (2016) rather than looking into

the role perceptions of journalists in abstract terms. The notion of 'performance', in fact, is tied up with the form of social structures and public life within which journalism is performed (Ryfe 2016). From Ryfe's (2016) viewpoint, journalistic routines are not a set of codified practices, which are followed and shaped by journalists in their daily work throughout time, as academic literature about the role perception of journalists tend to highlight (see section 2.1.1 on page 26). Rather, according to Ryfe (2016), journalists, through the constant practice of news production within specific societal contexts tend to acquire the 'practical knowledge' that, ultimately, constitutes their journalism 'performance'. As a result, the exploration of this performance expresses how journalists take part in public life much more than the analysis of their role perceptions may do.

In particular, according to Ryfe (2016), journalistic work is embedded in public life differently within distinct societal contexts. For instance, if journalists working in liberal democratic contexts are asked to explain why sources should be balanced in news reporting, in the last resort their answer will entail a relationship with audiences. In fact, in such socio-political contexts, journalists are keen to put citizens in a position to develop their own ideas about the facts that are narrated in the news. As Tandoc et al. (2013) have also argued, practices and routines of news production are, therefore, what shows how journalists enact journalism in practical terms.

It is in this light that the 'communicative gap' between news narratives and journalists' accounts of their news coverage about migrant border crossings is explored here. Take for instance journalists' denial of political influence over their news reporting. On the one hand, the literature (Hallin and Mancini 2004;

Ciaglia 2013; Humanes Humanes et al. 2013; Cornia et al. 2016; Briziarelli 2017) has highlighted the partisanship of journalists as well as the political parallelism of media systems in both Italy and Spain – phenomena which have affected the news representation of migrants throughout time, as discussed in the Literature Review. On the other hand, the interviews with journalists have highlighted that the political leanings of news media organisations are factors that determine neither journalistic performance, which is rather affected by time constraints and tight deadlines, nor the representation of migrants and migrant border crossings in Italy and Spain, which is largely influenced by the continuous reiteration of journalistic practices and routines.

Nevertheless, the analysis of news items that has been provided in the previous chapter has demonstrated that the war-like language of politicians characterises both the Italian and Spanish news narratives significantly. This reflects conventional practices of journalism, such as the production of balanced reporting, which is built on official news sources and news agencies' releases, rather than manifesting the direct influence of politics over journalists. Indeed, whether an 'advocate' or a 'disseminator' role is highlighted (Canel and Piqué 1998; Hanitzsch 2011; van Dalen et al. 2012; Mancini 2013; Cornia et al. 2016), research would fail to explain such a performance by Italian and Spanish journalists unless the weight of traditional journalistic practices in daily work is taken into account.

According to these premises, this chapter will remark further that market logics are what most often condition the news reporting of migrant border crossings in the online environment, although the research interviews have

revealed that journalists have a poor opinion of consumerism and that their main aim is to inform the public. In particular, the next sections will shed light on how the technology of the Internet is employed in the production of online news. News features such as photogalleries and videos convey online news while attracting audiences to news media platforms (see also Wise et al. 2009; Caple and Knox 2012; Himelboim and McCreery 2012), where readers become consumers of online news products (also, Himelboim and McCreery 2012; Tandoc 2014; Oller Alonso 2015).

As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, there are emerging journalistic practices revolving around the technological features of the Internet, which also involve online readers in the process of online news production in order to strengthen the impact of journalistic work in a highly competitive news media market. In sum, the next sections will draw attention to how journalists perceive their work and how this is changing due to the rise of new practices. Finally, it will be suggested here that it is the feeling of being members of a larger community of professionals, who adhere to shared values and ethical principles, that enables journalists to cope with the constraints of online news production.

5.2 Role and agency of journalists

At the end of a panel at the International Journalism Festival 2016, a member of the audience publicly accused an Italian economic journalist working at the daily newspaper *La Repubblica* of avoiding reporting the influence of

'traditionally privileged lobbies' over Italian politics. In particular, the protester claimed that *La Repubblica*, like other mainstream Italian news media organisations, was tied up with such lobbies. The journalist's reaction was immediate and straightforward:

"I wish that the things, all the wrong things that are in the newspapers, were a consequence of ownership (of news media)... at least, there would be an explanation of some sort. Many of the wrong things that I see are the result and 'victim' of (journalists') carelessness, incompetence, haste, disorganisation. I can say, as many other journalists, that... you really do not feel the (weight of) ownership, you do not care... When we make mistakes, eighty, ninety per cent of the time, it is our fault, and it is much easier to say 'Ah, our newspaper has been bought by these or those'... Journalists, I put myself among them, have a quantity of responsibility which is *enormous*" (spoken emphasis)¹⁰⁹.

Similarly, when interviewed for research purposes, Spanish journalists were also confronted by a question about the influence that news media outlets may have over their news reporting of migrant border crossings. At first, journalists denied that news media affected their work; then, while articulating

¹⁰⁹ The original quote here is, as follows: "*Io mi augurerei che le cose, tutte le cose sbagliate che si vedono sui giornali, fossero la conseguenza della proprietà.... almeno ci sarebbe una spiegazione di qualche tipo. Tante delle cose sbagliate che io vedo sono frutto e vittima di sciatteria, incompetenza, fretta, disorganizzazione... Posso dire che io, come tanti altri giornalisti... la proprietà veramente non la si sente, non la si ascolta... Quando facciamo degli errori, l'80% delle volte, il 90% delle volte, è colpa nostra, ed è molto più facile dire 'ah, ci han comprato quelli, ci hanno preso quegli altri'... I giornalisti hanno una quantità di responsabilità, e io mi metto tra di loro, enorme...*".

The video of the conference is available online and can be watched here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLKD4nfGTHZ_ODfv0wwNYaNqFn2W1VuuAh&v=LZF0TVeJMc

their answers, as a 'we', they tended to justify their performance by paying attention to the broader context of their working environments. When asked: "Do *El País*' political leanings influence the news coverage of migrant border crossing?", one of the two journalists who were interviewed there promptly said: "I would not say 'political leanings' (*orientamento politico*)... (I would say) 'editorial line' (*linea editoriale*)", thus distancing his/her own work from any possible political implications. He/she then continued:

"Yes, of course, this is a newspaper that has historically been progressive on issues of civil rights (...) therefore, on this whole matter (migration), there is an editorial *vis* (strength) that (...) has made us work a lot... and for us this is a 'calling' (*bandiera*, lit. flag)... you should have noted that we continuously publish editorials about this matter, frequently criticising the decisions from Brussels..."¹¹⁰.

The journalist confirmed that news reporting of migrant border crossings at *elpais.com* follows narrative guidelines but only to imply that human and professional values are behind such news coverage. To support the statement, the journalist then mentioned an editorial initiative that *El País* had launched in May 2016 to celebrate its 40th anniversary: the publication of four music CDs, whose proceeds went to humanitarian organisations involved in rescue

¹¹⁰ Since the mother tongue of one of two journalists working at *elpais.com* is Italian, the original passage from the interview reads: "*Non direi orientamento politico... la linea editoriale... Sì, certamente, questo è un giornale che storicamente è stato progressista in materia dei diritti civili (...) quindi in tutta questa faccenda certamente c'è una vis editoriale che fa sì che noi (...) abbiamo lavorato molto... e per noi questa è una bandiera... avrai visto che ci sono continuamente editoriali del giornale su questa materia, spesso criticando decisioni di Bruxelles...*".

operations and assistance of migrants at sea such as Doctors without Borders¹¹¹. By doing this, the journalist clearly stressed a need to involve readers in the support of these organisations while making audiences aware of the struggles of migrants at the border. Proud of the initiative, the journalist remarked that:

“Journalists within the newsroom sang along with that song... and we have publicised (the initiative) with all our strength. It is a non-journalistic event, which tells you that for us (migrant border crossings) are not just a story...”¹¹².

During a subsequent interview with a journalist working at *El Mundo*, the research question about the influence of news media organisations over news reporting was expressed differently: “Does *El Mundo*'s ‘editorial line’ (*línea editorial*) influence the news coverage of migrant border crossing?”. Nevertheless, the journalist's first reply showed some bitterness: “All newspapers have an editorial line... objectivity does not exist”¹¹³. The question was thus rephrased again: “What is *El Mundo*'s editorial line?”

¹¹¹ The four CDs, which are dedicated to four different seas and are all collected under the title '*Refugio del sonido*' (shelter of sound), can be bought at Spanish newsstands. Each of them is contained in a slipcase, where extensive editorials contextualising the migration phenomenon and advocating the need for humanitarian intervention at sea, images, and migrants' personal stories are included. The initiative can be accessed online and the four CDs listened to at the following link: <http://elpais.com/especiales/2016/refugio-del-sonido/>

¹¹² The original quote from the interview is, as follows: “*I giornalisti del giornale si sono messi a cantare in playback su questa canzone (...) ...e l'abbiamo diffuso insomma con tutte le nostre forze... è un episodio non giornalistico che ti parla che per noi questa non è una storia qualsiasi...*”.

¹¹³ In Spanish, this statement is: “*Todos los periodicos tienen una línea editorial... la objetividad no existe*”.

It is worth recalling here that such a sceptical attitude towards objectivity from Spanish journalists has been highlighted in the literature about role perception (Martin and Gonzalez 1997; Canel and Piqué 1998; Humanes Humanes et al. 2013; Oller Alonso 2015). It has been observed there that Spanish journalists seek the fulfilment of objectivity by means of practices such as the use of balanced news sources and avoidance of opinions.

Indeed, also these interviews showed a defensive attitude from Spanish journalists towards their work as reporters as well as the stance of their news media organisations on migration-related matters. This is confirmed by the second journalist's final answer to the interview question, in which the adherence of *elmundo.es* to human and professional ethical values is firmly supported:

“El Mundo's editorial line is fundamentally in favour of refugees and of the search for an alternative way to allow refugees to enter Spain normally (...) The newspaper supports human rights, refugees, and (the idea that) Europe should not keep doing what it is currently doing: selling its refugees to Turkey and others (countries) in order not to let (refugees) come... This is the newspaper's fundamental editorial line”¹¹⁴.

This second interview reinforces the idea that the allusion to possible constraints on news reporting due to external influences makes Spanish

¹¹⁴ The original passage from the interview is: *“La línea editorial de El Mundo es fundamentalmente a favor de los refugiados y en el hecho de buscar una alternativa para que estos refugiados puedan tener una entrada de normalidad en España (...) El periódico está por apoyar los derechos humanos, por apoyar los refugiados, y porque Europa no sigue haciendo lo que está haciendo ahora, es decir, vender a sus refugiados a Turquía y a otros para que no llegen... Esta es la línea fundamental del periódico”.*

journalists promptly advocate ethical principles and norms such as objectivity in order to affirm the accountability of their work. Nevertheless, in *El País*' and *El Mundo*'s stylebooks, the notion of objectivity is neither stated nor described (Muñoz-Torres 2007). Rather, it is presupposed as part of the professional rules of journalism concerning news writing and text-building, such as the use of 'informative' adjectives and impartial news sources. Furthermore, in the two stylebooks, the role of journalists is described explicitly as that of the 'detached observer', the 'neutral transmitter', who must "pass along only the facts to the audiences" (Muñoz-Torres 2007, p227).

With regard to the linguistic rules that newspapers' stylebooks set, Cameron (1996) has drawn attention to the fact that they imply pre-determined choices about news narration. Far from being neutral, such rules define a 'good' writing style for journalists while emphasising news media's individual viewpoints over reality and defining how to tailor the 'truth' in the news to their audiences. Shapiro et al. (2013), on the other hand, have argued that the use of news sources entails journalistic practices such as verification and accuracy. These can be agreed with news media outlets but their actual performance by journalists may show 'discrepancies or divergence' between journalistic ideals and practices (Shapiro et al. 2013). In this regard, from the interviews that Shapiro et al. (2013) have conducted with Canadian journalists, it has emerged, for instance, that journalists may even outline news stories by employing poor sources of information such as other newspapers' coverage, or phone calls, only rarely verifying the facts in person.

If it is commonly accepted that journalistic practices legitimise the identity

of journalists as members of a professional group as well as their role within society, it can equally be affirmed that such practices act prominently as the 'resources' that journalists deploy "to justify to others that what they have done *is journalism*" (Ryfe 2016, p134 – emphasis in original), since there are no strict rules leading their execution. As Ryfe (2016) has pointed out, practices and routines are, in the last resort, what journalists need to take part in public life as a professional group. It can also be said that journalistic performance is more subject to rules of common sense that appeal to ideals and ethical principles rather than journalists' perceptions of their role (Ryfe 2016).

Research has demonstrated that journalists change their role perceptions at different stages of their life (Meyen and Riesmeyer 2012; Skovsgaard et al. 2013; Pihl-Thingvad 2015). It is suggested here that this may be due to the fact that journalists progressively adapt the performance of journalism to the socio-cultural contexts in which they live. As a consequence, it may be argued that, by recasting the journalistic values that role perceptions imply throughout time, journalists turn their performances – and the compromises that these may entail (Shapiro et al. 2013; Oller Alonso 2015) – into common journalistic practices.

It is worth observing here that an investigative focus on journalistic practices and routines also calls into question the function that the media system has in the development of specific performances on the side of journalists. For instance, the political role that Italian and Spanish journalists play in the respective media systems (among others, Humanes Humanes et al. 2013; Mancini 2013), as highlighted in the Literature Review, can be seen as a

result of two cultural contexts in which political activism is embedded within society, rather than as a standpoint of individual journalists. From this perspective, the investigation of journalists' performance reflects a holistic attitude towards journalism culture. In the current study, such an approach is helpful in putting into perspective the 'communicative gap' between news narratives and journalists' accounts about the news coverage of migrant border crossings. In the online environment, in fact, journalists' practices, as they are technology-based, melt into new journalistic routines and so into new ways to perform journalism.

In this regard, during the International Journalism Festival 2016, the Italian journalists Enrico Mentana, director of Italian news programmes on the TV channel *La7*, and Marco Damilano, deputy editor of the Italian weekly news magazine *L'Espresso*, vigorously claimed that the Internet, also due to the rise of social media, has 'swept away' (*spazzato via*) the 'mediators' (*mediatori*) between facts and audiences. As a result, journalists, and news media organisations more broadly, *which have traditionally had the role of narrating reality by sewing up its pieces into consistent narratives*¹¹⁵, have nowadays lost their function.

From Mentana's viewpoint, 'the mechanism of information' (*il meccanismo dell'informazione*) has been 'broken down' (*smontato*) and it

¹¹⁵ The sentence reported in Italics here is an attempt to translate Damilano's figurative language – it is not a direct quote. During his intervention, in fact, Damilano elaborated the concept more extensively. The same attempt of translation justifies the writing of a few words in Italics in the current and in the following paragraph. The video of the conference is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwcvwu33OC0>

cannot be *restored*¹¹⁶. Nevertheless, the Internet, as a conduit of information, is not responsible for that. The fragmentation of online news into brief texts, images, and videos is responsible, and so are journalists. By giving prominence to a variety of distinctive and not always relevant aspects of news stories, journalists have inadvertently started making the audiences feel like they know what the news is about even when they just access small pieces of information. Ultimately, journalists are accountable for having adapted their working practices to the medium, which is the 'structure' of the Internet.

Not only has such a structure progressively weakened the role of journalists as mediators. The rise of the audiences' power is an additional, important factor, which involves subtle and complex social dynamics. According to Giorgio Mottola¹¹⁷, an Italian investigative TV reporter, people do not trust journalists any more: they are in search for 'disintermediated news contents' (*contenuto disintermediato*). To explain this definition, the journalist brought as an example footage that demonstrates how investigatory reports on corruption may occasionally entail scenes in which journalists are threatened or even beaten in the attempt to do an interview. Due to the live connection to reality, he continued, audiences see the journalists there as trustworthy again, since they are shown in the very moment of losing their function as mediators.

In the field of Journalism Studies, the notion of 'disintermediation' commonly refers to the potentiality of networking and democratic participation

¹¹⁶ Literally, Mentana says that "journalists do not know how to put the pieces of the mechanism of information together again".

¹¹⁷ The video of this conference is available online and can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1SXSx9vx2Q>

that social media and the Internet as a whole offer (Coleman 2005; McLennan 2016). However, in an exploratory study on the influence of the Internet on journalism, Hall (2001) has argued that, in the digital environment, journalists lose their function of mediators due to the 'disintermediation effect' that the availability online of primary sources produces. In Hall's (2001) own words, "the web itself has taken over the role of mediating those sources for audiences" (p53) and their 'interpretation' has now become a "responsibility of the readers themselves" (p53).

In Mottola's public presentation, however, the idea of 'disintermediated news contents' emphasises the process of diverting audiences' attention away from the focus of the news while giving them the feeling of living the reality of the events. In this regard, Mottola has pointed out:

"I offer you contents about which you, viewer, reader, decide (what to think)... I give you the tools... and since you look through a keyhole at something not knowing even what it is, you think that it is more real than a service providing you with information (...) correct information (...) It is much more 'stimulating' (*stuzzicante* – emphasis in original) a disintermediation than a reasoned piece..."¹¹⁸.

From a similar perspective, Beckett and Deuze (2016) have observed that "people respond to emotion not ideas or facts" (p3) and placing emphasis

¹¹⁸ The original passage from Mottola's speech is, as follows: "*Io ti offro un contenuto su cui tu telespettatore, tu lettore, decidi... ti do gli strumenti... e dal momento che tu guardi dal buco della serratura un qualcosa che non sai neanche che cos'è, pensi che sia più reale rispetto a un servizio che ti dà delle informazioni (...) corrette (...) È molto più stuzzicante (...) una disintermediazione piuttosto che un pezzo ragionato*".

on that “redefines the classic idea of journalistic objectivity – indeed, it is reshaping the idea of news itself” (p2). Supporting such a statement, the analysis of the news items and the interviews with journalists that have been proposed in the previous chapter has demonstrated that news images and videos are selected to attract readers' interest by intensifying the emotional aspect of the news. In this regard, and similar to what the Italian journalists have previously noted, Tandoc (2014) has observed that the strategic use of the Internet and the fragmentation of online news into small pieces of information tend to draw audiences' attention to unrelated parts of the news. Since such news pieces include news videos and photogalleries, it may be argued that emotional processes are constantly at work in both online news production and consumption.

Ultimately, looking at journalistic performance in terms of culture (Zelizer 2005) is the key to understanding the contradictions that spring from practices of news production. Within such a framework, the 'communicative gap' between news narratives and the journalists' knowledge about news contexts can be explained through the existence of a weak relationship between what journalists think about their role and function within society and how they actually perform their work.

Take, for instance, the interviews with the two Spanish journalists working at *El País* that have been reported in this and in the previous chapter. They have both advocated the importance of consistent news coverage of migration and supported the ethical principles at the core of their reporting as well as their news media's guidelines. They have also remarked that the use of

videos and 'spectacular' news pictures can be particularly relevant to the dissemination of information on the Internet, although without stressing matters concerning the economic interests of the online news production. Nevertheless, the analysis of news narratives about migrant border crossings that *elpais.com* has produced throughout the period of time considered here has shown that, among the four Spanish online news media, it is this news media outlet that has circulated stereotyped representations of migrants and engaged with the war-language of politicians to the greatest extent.

From a cultural perspective, the means through which journalists continuously negotiate the ethical principles of their profession with the needs of having their work acknowledged in some way can be seen as a part of ongoing social and cultural transformations, within journalism as well as society. Accordingly, the strategic use of the structure of the Internet, which fragments online news, entails a fundamental turn in journalistic culture.

However, the journalists who were interviewed did not seem to always perceive that these new technical developments actually alter the substance of public communication. Their knowledge of processes of news production within traditional news media systems emerged clearly in conversation, as also highlighted in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, besides the recognition of the increasing role of social media as news sources, journalists tended not to discuss how online communication actually works and rarely acknowledged that the very mechanism of news production had been changed by the structure of

the Internet¹¹⁹.

As Latour (2002) may say, by shaping new working practices and habits of journalists, the technology of the Internet does not simply provide a new approach to information; rather, it changes how journalism itself is performed¹²⁰.

5.3 *Observing journalistic culture*

In interview, an Italian journalist suggested that, as a professional group, journalists are responsible for the current production of news narratives about migrant border crossings. They had permitted the constant reporting and visual representation of migrants' suffering at the Libya-Italy border to trigger a sort of widespread apathy or 'compassion fatigue' (Vestergaard 2008; Hanusch 2012; Grayson 2014; Pogliano 2015) in the general public. He/she also admitted that "too little had been said about the most important aspect (of migration), that is the integration"¹²¹ of migrants within European societies.

Furthermore, together with other Italian interviewees, he/she observed that journalists had allowed the sensationalism of headlines and pictures to replace analysis and in-depth reporting of migration. In this regard, during a public talk, a journalist working at *La Repubblica* recognised that images such

¹¹⁹ In this regard, the interview with the Spanish journalist that is reported in this chapter (page 249) is significant: it recognises the pressure that audiences exert on news selection due to their influential presence on social media.

¹²⁰ How Latour (2002) has interpreted the influence of technology on the production of culture has been discussed in the Literature Review (page 57-58).

¹²¹ This quote is from one of the two interviews with the journalists working at *repubblica.it*. The original text is: "Ed è vero che si parla troppo poco del lato più importante, che è l'integrazione".

as the one portraying the body of a child washed ashore on a Turkish beach are a 'punch to the stomach' (*un pugno nello stomaco*) and that 'they force you to think' (*ti costringono a pensare*). She confessed, nevertheless, that in their daily work journalists tend to 'choose' (*scegliere*) such images in order to turn them into 'symbols' (*simboli*), 'icons' (*icone*) even. Pictures, she then concluded, are in fact a 'narrative tool' (*strumento del racconto*), 'the most powerful'¹²² in the news.

By saying this, the journalist here ascribes the cogency of journalistic communication to news pictures. However, according to Barthes (1977), the message that news pictures convey depends on the channel through which they are disseminated. Barthes (1977) acknowledges that press photographs have their own narrative structure as reproductions of factual scenes of life; nevertheless, he affirms that it is the channel, the newsroom, that connotes their meaning (p16).

As places where journalists make choices about how news pictures should be present to their audiences, what texts – headlines and captions, for instance – should accompany news pictures, newsrooms produce specific representations of reality. As Barthes' (1977) has pointed out, "The totality of the information is thus carried by two different structures (one of which is linguistic)" (p16). Consequently, if journalists avoid acknowledging that, they indeed

¹²² This reference to such a use of news images comes from one of the conferences at the International Journalism Festival 2016. It is available online and it can be watched here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLKD4nfGTHZ_ODfv0wwNYaNqFn2W1VuuAh&v=A8smMg2tGoU. The transcription of a passage from this conference is, as follows: "*Succede che a un certo punto scegliamo dei simboli, scegliamo delle icone, addirittura (...) Le immagini diventano uno strumento del racconto (...) più potenti*".

minimise the role that they play in the circulation of cultural meanings within society.

In her public talk, the journalist admitted that ‘icons’ are produced within newsrooms for narrative purposes but she did not stress that how these icons are connoted depends on the texts that journalists put next to them. This lack of recognition seemed to be implicit also in the words that another Italian journalist working at *repubblica.it* said, this time in interview. He/she observed that the stories that news pictures narrate may have the power to direct and change international policies on immigration. In particular, the journalist remarked that *if*, in the past, a constant monitoring and reporting of individual stories of migrants like Aylan¹²³ had been in process, journalism might have compelled European governments to deal with migrant flows differently and to adopt a more rational and open approach to migration¹²⁴. Whether this view is realistic or not, by placing emphasis on the worth of journalistic work, the interviewee here underlined that what matters to journalists is their contribution to public life (Ryfe 2016) and that they do reflect on their work and practices while discussing the attainment of such a professional goal.

¹²³ While answering research questions, Italian and Spanish journalists often referred to the portrayal of Aylan's body to give an example of strong news images.

¹²⁴ The original passage from the interview, which was with an Italian journalist working as a foreign correspondent at *repubblica.it*, can be translated, as follows: “Perhaps we should have pushed on more of these individual stories, to make European governments understand that those stories help leaders like Merkel, who try to stay open and discuss (migrant flows) rationally”. However, out of the context of the interview, the fragment resulted unclear. Here in the text, therefore, it has been paraphrased. The transcription from the original speech is: “*Forse noi avremmo dovuto spingere di più su queste storie singole, per spingere i governi europei a capire che quelle storie aiutano governanti come Merkel, che cercano di mantenere un'apertura e cercano di mantenere un discorso razionale*”.

In the context of the power of images and the consequences of their publication, one of the two Spanish journalists working at *elmundo.es* revealed that Aylan's story represented the narrative tipping point after which news media organisations began to increasingly show the death of migrant children at the borders. While reflecting on that, the journalist asked a rhetorical question: “Did media have a real impact on the life of the refugees who tried to reach (Europe)?”¹²⁵, and immediately replied:

“The truth is that the media did not have (such an impact), since no one (no political actors) did anything... And (now) this (the death of migrants in the Aegean Sea) happens in direct sunlight! Not like (it occurs) in the Central Mediterranean...”¹²⁶.

Later on, when asked about the editorial line of *El Mundo*, the same journalist kept expanding on journalistic attitudes by news media outlets and how they approach the news about the migrant crossings of borders:

“In spring last year (2015), at the beginning, when the crisis of refugees (travelling) towards Europe begun, yes, the news had an impact, due to the number of readers (...) At that time, the news (about the refugee crisis) was followed by readers more than other news stories... However, since such a crisis lasted for a long time,

¹²⁵ In Spanish, this rhetorical question is: “*El impacto mediático tiene un impacto real en la vida de los refugiados que entantaron llegar*”.

¹²⁶ The journalist referred here to the short distance between Greece and Turkey which allows, from the Greek coasts, clear sight of migrant boats leaving Turkey. He/she then compared this scenario to what instead happens at the Libya-Italy border, where monitoring the flux of migrants at sea is much more difficult. The passage from the interview is, in Spanish: “*La realidad es que no lo tuvo, porque nadie hizo nada... Y es algo que sucede a la luz del día! No como en el Mediterráneo central...*”.

readers lost interest... which returned to rise up when the child (Aylan) drowned... and then it went down again (...) In news coverage there are peaks of interest, which become 'viral' on social networks (as in the case of Aylan)... During those peaks, all that was published had repercussions (...) Most of the media sent their journalists to cover (news stories about) refugees in Melilla, in Lampedusa... as a consequence of (readers') interest (...) The fact is that we have now already told everything..."¹²⁷.

This passage demonstrates that the role of audiences has become an integral part of the process of news production (Murphy 2015). Online readers contribute actively, although not consciously, to the coverage of news stories in which they have an interest simply by spending their time on news media platforms. While monitoring online readers' behaviour on their websites by means of web analytics, news media outlets collect readers' data and preferences, which actually influence the decision-making process of editors about what news stories should be covered and how (Tandoc 2014; Welbers et al. 2016).

As this last passage from the interview demonstrates, it has been the

¹²⁷ Although this passage is long, it was worth reporting it here as it highlights the relevance that impact has for journalists, also in terms of role perception. It also underlines the role of online readers in the agenda setting of news media organisations. The original transcription from the interview is, as follows: "*En primavera del año pasado, a el principio, cuando empezó la crisis de refugiados hasta Europa, sí que tenía un impacto las noticias por numero de lectores (...) A esa epoca, sí que tenía un seguimiento de parte de los lectores, superiore a otras noticias (...) Como la crisis durò tanto (...) el lector perdió interese... volvé a subir cuando se ahogó este niño, pero luego se hundió (...) El tratamiento informativo tiene picos de interés... picos que tienen una aplicación 'viral' en la red social... con estos, todo lo que se publicaba tenía una ripercusión (...) La mayoría de los medios han enviados a sus periodistas a cubrir refugiados sobre el terreno, tanto a Melilla cuanto a Lampedusa (...) como derivado del interés (...) Es que ya hemos contado casi todo...*".

public's attention to what was happening at the border to make news media closely report migrants' stories from the field for a certain period of time. Nevertheless, according to the same passage, news media and individual journalists failed to influence the discourse of European politics about immigration. In addition, the journalist observed that, over time, news narratives about immigration have changed and that the current news focus is on the 'adaptation' (*adaptación*) of refugees to European society.

The investigation of the impact that news media's narratives may have on politics falls outside the scope of this research. However, the passages from the two interviews reported here have highlighted that Italian and Spanish journalists care about the social impact that their work can produce, even when they raise doubts about their power to actually influence politicians' and audiences' attitudes towards migration. Impact can therefore be seen as a further aspect influencing news narratives about migrants 'at the border'. At the same time, it shows that journalists are inclined to ask themselves questions about their function within society while reporting dramatic events, which challenge both their professional and personal values. About this latter aspect, one of the journalists here shared in conversation personal memories about his/her involvement as a rescuer at the Morocco-Spain border, where he/she was working as a correspondent.

In the next and final section, a few passages from the two interviews with the journalists working in the Italian and Spanish digital-born news media considered in this study will shed light on the difficulties concerning news reporting in this type of news media organisation. In order to discuss the

economic limitations that journalists face in a context of independent online journalism, the two journalists here reflected on their professional role more broadly.

5.4 *The freedom of online journalism*

At *lettera43.it*, the news narratives about migrant border crossings as well as how migrants integrate themselves into Italian society are mainly the product of desk activities within the newsroom. Going to the places where news events happen, in fact, is a luxury that many Italian news media cannot afford, according to the Italian journalist working for this news medium. This seems to be the case also when journalists are willing to pay travel expenses themselves, since, even so, the news media still have to insure their correspondents. Particularly for digital-born news media, therefore, it is convenient to have a network of freelancers living or working in distant areas of the nation and even abroad who can supply timely journalistic services¹²⁸.

As the journalist said, at *lettera43.it* an editorial line does not exist. It might even happen, in fact, that: “two different journalists (...) write about the same argument from two completely different viewpoints”¹²⁹. When asked to

¹²⁸ About this matter, the journalist explained: “We have correspondents (freelancers)... those who work with us on a regular basis are four or five worldwide. They are paid per article but continuously... the others come and go”. The passage in Italian is: “*Abbiamo dei corrispondenti... quelli abbastanza fissi saranno quattro o cinque, dal mondo... Vengono pagati al pezzo però hanno un rapporto continuativo, poi gli altri vanno e vengono...*”.

¹²⁹ This passage from the interview begins with: “Guidelines about contents do not exist within our newsroom”. Together with the quote already reported in the text, the original transcription

outline how journalists organise their working practices and routines within the newsroom, the Italian interviewee highlighted that they all must be able to perform, autonomously, almost every task concerning news production, from covering the news to writing headlines.

He/she remarked that, as digital journalists:

“We all started (in 2010) from scratch, even the editors in chief (...) for all of us it was an experiment and we were obsessed by news coverage, by (being) fast...”¹³⁰.

The journalist then admitted that *lettera43.it* worked as a springboard for his/her career in journalism (see also Meyen and Riesmeyer 2012). There, he/she could cover and write about challenging news topics, even the Syrian war¹³¹. This would have never happened in a traditional newsroom where, due to the lack of experience, he/she could barely cover national news. The

here reads: “*Non c'è una linea editoriale in redazione per quanto riguarda i contenuti... giornalisti diversi possono scrivere sullo stesso tema con due opinioni completamente diverse*”.

¹³⁰ The original passage is: “*Siamo partiti tutti da zero, anche i direttori (...) tutti siamo partiti in fase sperimentale e quindi c'è stata un'ossessione per la copertura, per la velocità...*”. The interviewee also added that, at the beginning, journalists used to work during weekends. Then, working routines changed. Instead of being all in the newsroom throughout the working day, at the present time they have morning and afternoon shifts, from 9am to 10pm, and do not work on Saturday and Sunday, unless something ‘striking’ (*eclatante*) happens. Similarly, changes in working routines within newsrooms due to the requirements of the online news production were reported also by journalists working for traditional news media outlets. One of the interviewees, for instance, reported that at *elmundo.es* journalists now have morning, afternoon, and night shifts, to fulfil worldwide 24 hours news coverage.

¹³¹ This passage from the interview was not recorded. The interview in fact had just ended when the journalist decided to relate his/her own experience as an online journalist. The passage was first noted down and then the recording was launched once again.

interviewee defined the 'opportunity' (*opportunità*) that digital-born news media can give to a new generation of journalists as 'educational' (*formativa*), from a professional point of view. This type of online news media, in fact, can enable "you (to) gain a knowledge of facts that you cannot have if you spend years writing 'footnotes' (*trafiletti*)"¹³² in a traditional newsroom. In addition, although the journalist acknowledged that a lack of experience may lead to a certain 'level of imprecision' (*tasso di imprecisione*) in reporting the news, he/she observed that online texts can always be corrected. In the journalist's words:

"The fact that you can always make changes in online news articles is an advantage... I mean, if a piece is imprecise... perfect pieces do not exist... as soon as someone tells you, even days later, 'Look, it is this way', you can always improve the piece (...) For the new generations (of journalists), this is certainly the way in to journalism"¹³³.

The interview revealed that there are practices of online news production that are actually redefining the professional values and the role performance of journalists. Such practices mainly concern the opportunity to change online texts even days after their publication and the use of the Internet as the most valuable means for sourcing the news.

After interviewing journalists working in the online environment, Joseph

¹³² The quote in Italian is: "*Acquisisci anche una conoscenza dei fatti che non avresti a passare anni a scrivere trafiletti*".

¹³³ The transcription of this passage in Italian reads: "*Il vantaggio dell'online è che tu puoi cambiare sempre i pezzi... cioè se i pezzi sono imprecisi, perché non esiste il pezzo perfetto, tu appena qualcuno ti dice, anche giorni dopo, 'Guarda, è così', tu lo puoi sempre migliorare... (...)* Per le nuove generazioni è questo il canale d'ingresso, sicuramente, nel giornalismo".

(2011) has reported that the chance to correct online news articles as soon as mistakes are observed is seen as an 'advantage' by journalists, particularly in comparison with print editions, where wrong information cannot be modified. This practice is certainly a cause for concern about the ethics of such an 'advantage'. Nevertheless, it draws attention to new emerging principles in journalism culture, where individual values of self-responsibility and accountability merge with more traditional, normative standards of journalistic practice (Joseph 2011; Agarwal and Barthel 2015).

The journalist working at *lettera43.it*, who did not mention any negative aspect concerning the sudden modification of news articles, explained that the quality of online news content essentially revolves around the journalistic writing style, which is what differentiates a journalist from a mere blogger. Such a viewpoint implies that the role of journalists is fundamentally to craft balanced and concise news articles according to professional norms.

Furthermore, it is worth emphasising that, in small online journalistic projects such as *lettera43.it*, the scarcity of economic resources does not only affect the quality of news coverage: actually, it is a key factor in strengthening specific practices and routines for journalists. For instance, as highlighted in the interview section of the previous chapter, the basic way to source the news at *lettera43.it* is by doing quick research online. This highlights that journalism in small online news media organisations is predominantly a desk and technology-based activity (see also Paterson 2008; Quandt 2008) and that new journalistic practices are developed there accordingly.

In this regard, Hartley (2000) has suggested that after the introduction of

the Internet within newsrooms the social role of journalists has moved from the combative function of 'watchdog' to a compliant one of 'redacting', rather than producing, information. The technology of the Internet, which provides journalists with news-ready content, may have even turned journalists into "search engines who provide editorial services for other users" (Hartley 2000, p43). Such a claim, which also implies the emerging role of the public as online writers (Hartley 2000, p43), seems to resonate with Mottola's warning on audiences' search for 'disintermediated news contents'. In fact, as Hartley (2000) has noted, if we all can communicate our viewpoints in public, it means that there is no need to 'delegate' them to journalists.

In other words, the process of disintermediation that begins with the widespread availability of online materials may be at the core of a new form of journalism culture, which favours the "reprocessing of existing discourse" (Harley 2000, p44) through online redactional skills rather than intervening in society through investigative works. From this perspective, Hartley (2000) has supported the idea that traditional journalism may be in the process of being 'dissolved' by the influence of technology within newsrooms.

However, it may be argued that the practical limits within which journalists perform their profession are what actually defines journalism, perhaps even more than journalistic content does. In order to clarify this point it is worth recalling here that, while redacting news content about migrant border crossings, the journalists who were interviewed said (see '4.3 *Interviews with journalists*') that they pay attention to the words that they use to describe migrants as well as their movements across borders. At the same time, these

journalists admitted that they surrender to practices such as the use of spectacular images in order to attract readers and that they need to use official sources to legitimise their reporting¹³⁴.

The cases of the two digital-born news media considered in this study support this perspective further. In interview, the journalists working at the Italian *lettera43.it* and the Spanish *infolibre.es* have in fact stressed that the financial difficulties that the two independent news media experience limit the covering of news about migrant border crossings, although they may potentially disseminate contents without being influenced by the stance of political parties. In addition, they have highlighted that their two news media tend to adapt their communication to that of traditional newspapers – still, without comparable economic resources at their disposal.

In other words, economic difficulties have led the newsrooms of *lettera43.it* and *infolibre.es* to select the news events that they can cover according to both factual possibilities and professional aims. The form of journalism that they propose, therefore, should not be examined only from the perspective of the content that they disseminate, as Hartley (2000) seems to suggest. Indeed, how the journalists working at the two news media outlets deal with the practical limitations of their daily work should also be considered.

Overall, the two Italian and Spanish digital-born news media cover a different range of news topics, according to the two interviewees. While *lettera43.it* tends to cover miscellaneous news, the main focus of *infolibre.es* is

¹³⁴ In the online environment, such practices may express meanings even beyond journalists' intentions as online content is multi-layered and its narrative structure complex, as premised in the Methodology and demonstrated across this study.

on national political news, just as in many other Spanish news media. From this perspective and with regard to the migrant crossings of the Morocco-Spain border, the Spanish interviewee affirmed that these are news stories of national interest, although he/she admitted that *infolibre.es* does not have the resources to produce independent and original news contents about them. As reported in the previous chapter, the only way in which this news medium can provide an in-depth coverage of news about migration is to involve academics and other experts in the field and ask them to write informative opinion-based articles.

Furthermore, the journalist remarked that *infolibre.es* was founded as an independent journalistic project by a small number of Spanish journalists sharing values and ethical principles:

“In terms of information, we have an editorial line which is progressive, or left-wing, against the criminalisation of immigration... but we cannot influence this matter, as we are very conditioned...”¹³⁵.

Beside the fact that this assertion implies the wish that journalism could have an impact on society, as Ryfe (2016) has stressed, by saying ‘conditioned’ (pl. *condicionados*), the journalist drew attention to the economic difficulties which make it almost impossible to source the news about migrant border crossings through private or non-institutional channels. The resulting ‘second-hand’ (*de secunda mano*) news coverage is based on the releases of news

¹³⁵ The original passage from the interview is: “*Nosotros tenemos una línea informativa editorial progresista, o de izquierda, en contra del tema de criminalización de inmigrantes... pero no tenemos posibilidad de influir en eso... porque estamos muy condicionados*”.

agencies as well as desk-based online research and, therefore, it is neither independent nor autonomous. He/she then observed that only a few journalists in Spain can be considered as migration 'experts' (*especialistas*). When asked about the reasons for such a claim, he/she said:

"To begin with, it is a political matter... overall, the conservative press mainly considers (migrant border crossings) as a problem of public order, of delinquency... The press practises demagogy... The news media which are more independent or progressive have never seen (migration this way)... It has been so for years and now, as (migrant border crossings) have become a kind of routine, (the news about them) has (been) moved to a fourth, fifth, sixth level of attention..."¹³⁶.

From this journalist's viewpoint, Spanish journalists demonstrate an overall lack of understanding of the economic and socio-political issues concerning migration and this would affect the news narratives that they produce. According to him/her, the vagueness of terms that Spanish journalists employ to describe migrant border crossings would limit the narration of those events as well as the description of the situations in which migrants live at the border:

¹³⁶ This claim seems to contradict what the Spanish journalists working at *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es* have affirmed in this and in the previous chapter, as they supported the progressive editorial lines of the respective newspapers. However, the journalist at *infolibre.es* reported here did not explicitly mention either *El País* or *El Mundo* and further comments would represent a mere speculation. In Spanish, the passage reads, as follows: "*Hay un cuestión... en primer instancia política, porque la prensa conservadora, en general, lo considera más un problema de orden público, de delincuencia... la prensa practica la demagogia... los medios más independientes o más progresistas nunca lo han visto como (...) Funciona así durante años, y luego, como se ha convertido en una cierta rutina, el tema ya pasa a un cuarto, quinto o sexto lugar en atención...*".

“In all the news media, big, small, modern, traditional, (the matter of migration/ migrant border crossings) is connected more to humanitarian aid than, more precisely, to social, economic, or political problem(s)... Most of the people (therefore) confuse humanitarian aid with development cooperation... they confuse (the system of migrant) assistance with cooperation and solidarity (...) The way in which news media convey information moves the heart more than the head...”¹³⁷.

While explaining why, across different Spanish news media, only a few journalists can be considered migration experts, able to analyse the contexts of migration, the journalist affirmed that there is a certain indolence on the side of journalists towards their own work. As also Gabilondo (2011) has observed, within Spanish newsrooms journalists tend to execute daily tasks in order to deliver timely news products, without showing a willingness to actually comprehend the contexts in which news events are grounded.

According to Gabilondo (2011) as well as the journalist working at *infolibre.es*, the resulting lack of understanding of broader socio-political scenarios would not be a matter of academic education, which Spanish journalists usually demonstrate (Oller Alonso 2015). Rather, as both Gabilondo (2011) and the interviewee here have argued, it is inherent in the current practice of journalism itself. Due to the competitiveness of the online news media market, journalists nowadays give prominence to the efficiency of their

¹³⁷ The transcription from the interview is: “*En todos los medios, grandes, pequeños, modernos, tradicionales, se asocia más a la ayuda humanitaria que propiamente como problema social o económico o político (...) Mucha de la gente confunde la ayuda humanitaria con la cooperación al desarrollo, confunde el asistencialismo con la cooperación o la solidaridad (...) Los medios dan la información de tal forma que conmueve más al corazón que a la cabeza...*”.

practices and routines rather than the content that they disseminate. Hence, as the interview conducted at *infolibre.es* then concluded, news narratives about migrant border crossings and migration more broadly can be considered as the result of 'a sin of omission' (*un pecado de omisión*) – omission of attention and understanding.

In conclusion, this chapter has drawn attention to the performance of journalism in both traditional and digital-born online news media in Italy and Spain, how this relates to the technological features of the online news production, and how their relationship drives the production of news narratives about migrant border crossings. The journalists' accounts of thoughts which have been presented here have revealed that at the core of the 'communicative gap' between news narratives and journalists' attitude towards migration there is a tendency to adhere to a market-driven use of technology in online news production. In this chapter, it has also been emphasised that such a tendency enables journalists from different newsrooms, as 'a we', to cope with the limits of their practices and routines by conforming the way they produce news reporting to each other's work, rather than sticking to general ethical principles.

In conclusion, the 'communicative gap' that has been evidenced across the Data Analysis chapter seems to be due to the distance between practices and ideals of journalists in the online news production, where journalistic performance is challenged by the structure of the Internet as the dominant conduit of information. What has been revealed here is also the existence of a further fundamental gap, which is between information and communication. This is particularly visible in the online news environment, in which the technological

features of the Internet can be employed strategically for narrative purposes.

In the next chapter, the news items analysed by the current work will be discussed in terms of news messages. As the Data Analysis has demonstrated, from September 2013 to August 2015 both Italian and Spanish news coverage of migrant border crossings employed a war-like language, with little difference between the narratives that have been disseminated by the four online versions of traditional news media and the four digital-born news media considered in this study. The next chapter will be an attempt to contextualise such narratives while discussing the production of meanings in online news about migrant border crossings.

6.0 Migrants across borders and the survival of state identity: meanings and power struggle

In the analysis of narratives, meanings cannot be reduced to a simple sequence of items. Meanings are rather inherent in dense systems of relationships between human and institutional actors, whose qualities are historically and culturally determined (Barthes 1977; 2000). According to Hartley (1996), any scenario in which meanings are produced is so vast and complex that its analysis will probably end up articulating the relationships between the societal norms from which meanings originate rather than the “actual signification of meanings” (p3). However, the news is, in itself, an invaluable source of information about their production. It sheds light on the current meaning-making processes, the systems of interactions between actors, that are at work at a given time within society and that, ultimately, shape culture (Hartley 1996).

In this chapter, which intends to discuss the meanings springing from news narratives about migrant border crossings, the relationships between the human and institutional actors that have been identified in the news processes as well as the contexts in which these interact will be explored from an historical and cultural perspective that has the effect of widening the scope of this study. The importance of this approach resides in its response to the limitations given by the time frame under consideration here, in which meanings such as those referring to the 'illegality' of migrants lead us to critically consider a wider

framework of analysis. Past socio-political contexts in the colonial and imperialism eras, in fact, have played a significant role in the production of meanings about 'the others' as well as states' identity and functions in Western culture. Legitimately, the news narratives that have been explored in this work can be seen as a reflection of such a cultural legacy.

For this reason, a critical hypothesis is suggested here and it will be discussed across the chapter. This considers that, in narratives about migrant border crossings, migrants are not the main focus of the news; states are. Indeed, what the news actually narrates is the current process of redefinition of the European states' national identities that is tied to both the development and reinforcement of the European Union as a supranational power in the last forty years, as also noted by Sassen (1996) in the early stage of the EU's political formation. In the case of Italy and Spain, as discussed in the Literature Review section '*2.3 Borders and migrant representation in Italy and Spain*' (from page 67), such a process of redefinition of the state identity is linked to governmental structural changes within the European scenario as well as public debate about protection and control of national borders, which articulate emerging power relations between institutional and political actors (Casas Cortes et al. 2012).

In order to provide reasons for the discussion of this hypothesis, this chapter will connect research findings to broader socio-political contexts. In particular, it will try to demonstrate that news meanings about the crossings of borders towards Europe do not concern the safety of migrants. Rather, the analysis of news narratives seems to indicate that at the core of states' attitudes towards contemporary immigration there is a process of redefinition of their

power over people, whether they are migrants or citizens, and this tends to reproduce a certain colonial thinking in public discourse.

6.1 *Answering research questions*

The analysis of news items has so far shed light on the representation of migrants as well as the production processes of online news rather than specifically focusing on the meanings that are inherent in the narratives about migrant border crossings. To begin with, therefore, this section will look at Italian and Spanish news narratives about the crossings of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders by migrants in order to answer in full the research questions and will summarise research findings as the starting point for a further discussion about news meanings.

The previous chapter has demonstrated that journalistic performance and news contents depend on compromises between working practices and professional ideals of journalists. In addition, it was shown there that such a performance is influenced by the use of the tools that the Internet provides, which articulate online information through diverse semiotic modes of expression, both textual and visual. Within this framework, online news has emerged as a 'choral product' whose authors – journalists, editors, photographers, video-makers, graphic designers – do not need to agree on a shared news message¹³⁸.

¹³⁸ As fragments of online news narratives can be spread across news texts, pictures, videos, and hyperlink content, all of them providing specific perspectives on the news, it may even be

Furthermore, the analyses of news items and the interviews with journalists have highlighted that journalistic performances and routines are quite similar across the working environments of different news media organisations. In particular, research findings have demonstrated that Italian and Spanish news narratives about migrant border crossings have in common a war-like language, which largely springs from the reproduction of politicians' statements. Nevertheless, as discussed in the Data Analysis, the representation of migrants varies across the two countries, since it is determined by the different nature of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders.

In this regard, findings have demonstrated that the Italian and Spanish representations of migrants 'at the border' in the time frame considered here revolve around the idea that those attempting to reach Europe from Africa are 'masses of desperate' and 'undocumented people'. At the Libya-Italy border, African migrants are portrayed as victims, whether they are victims of poverty or human traffickers (RQ1a-b¹³⁹), in both news texts and images. From a visual perspective, migrants are represented in the act of travelling in crowded, crumbling boats, often in distress in the Mediterranean; in the circumstance of being rescued at sea; and, awaiting for identification in long queues on docks. Similarly, migrants are represented as masses of desperate people at the Morocco-Spain border, where they are portrayed fighting against border guards; in dense groups of indistinct people clinging to the border fences; running,

argued that the structure of online news conveys as many messages as the combination of its diverse semiotic modes can articulate.

¹³⁹ How are migrants 'at the border' represented in the news (a) and how are they portrayed in news pictures and videos (b)?

exhausted but joyous, after succeeding in climbing the triple border fence in Melilla; sitting on the CETI's yard in clumps, awaiting; and covered by red blankets after being rescued at sea.

Overall, in the narratives of the news items that have been analysed in this work, migrants' *journeys* across borders are motivated by hope as well as despair – travelling towards Europe is an attempt to flee poverty and war, and get a better future (RQ2a-b¹⁴⁰). The news rarely gives a space to migrants' own voices, which are nevertheless occasionally reported by official sources such as the crew members of Italian and Spanish search and rescue organisations and representatives of international NGOs.

In the Italian case, it is the portrayal of a humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean (De Genova 2013; Martínez Lirola 2014; Dines et al. 2015) that dominates news narratives and reinforces a war-like scenario whose focus is on the 'fight against traffickers' by Italian and European governments. In the Spanish case, on the other hand, the 'massive assaults' of migrants on the Morocco-Spain border (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008; Campesi 2012) as well as their journeys across the Strait of Gibraltar are sensationalised through the publication of 'spectacular' news pictures. This practice aims to engage audiences with the emotional aspects of the news, as stated in interview by journalists themselves (see also Beckett and Deuze 2016).

At a deeper level of analysis and with regard to the presence of a war-like language in the news, findings have revealed that news narratives about

¹⁴⁰ What are the news narratives about migrant border crossings (a) and how have they changed from September 2013 to August 2015 (b)?

the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean have shifted, over the period under consideration, from the depiction of an emerging humanitarian crisis, which has pushed Italy to claim the economic and political assistance of the European Union, to a more collective defensive attitude towards immigration, which also involves member states of the European Union as well as northern African countries such as Libya and Morocco. Following such a political approach, news narratives about the crossings of the Libya-Italy border by migrants have progressively focused on the development and deployment of military means and initiatives at sea such as FRONTEX and the reinforcement of security measures at the EU's southern borders.

In a similar fashion, the representation of the migrant crossings of the Morocco-Spain border has moved from a national viewpoint about the management of the Melilla and Ceuta borders to a call for the European Union's involvement in the control of the southern Spanish border, which overlaps the EU's external border in Africa. This narrative transition in Spanish news, as corroborated by the interviews with journalists, started in spring 2015, when migrants attempted a series of mass crossings in Melilla and the injuring and death of some of them was reported in the news. As a result, at that time, violations of human rights indeed put the Spanish government in the spotlight at a European level.

In both the Italian and Spanish cases, the constant and widespread reproduction of political statements in the news has characterised news

narratives over time (RQ3a¹⁴¹). Neither the online versions of the traditional daily newspapers nor the digital-born news media considered here did stand out as channels for independent communication about migrant border crossings. They in fact share contents coming from the same official news sources and news agencies and publish similar video footage from NGOs such as Doctors without Borders, which operate in the Mediterranean alongside governmental agencies such as UNHCR and the national Navy of European countries (RQ3b).

The only positive exception was *eldiario.es* which, while adhering to the defence of human rights as one of the aims of its journalistic mission, tried to vary its sources of information and involved even minor Spanish NGOs such as *Caminando Fronteras*¹⁴², which collaborates with operators in the field, in news sourcing. Through the news coverage of migrant border crossings, *eldiario.es* has denounced the violence that both Spanish and Moroccan police forces have perpetrated against migrants in Melilla and Ceuta. It is worth recalling here the investigative reporting that *eldiario.es* produced after the events that occurred on 6th February 2014, when 15 migrants drowned while trying to reach Ceuta's beaches by swimming. Its journalistic work firmly opposed the government's official version of events and led to the accusation that the

¹⁴¹ What are the differences between Italian and Spanish online news media in migration-telling (a)? And what are the differences between traditional and digital-born news media's narratives (b)?

¹⁴² It is worth mentioning here that, when discussing news sources in interviews, both the journalists working at *elpais.com* explicitly said that this particular humanitarian organisation was not considered a reliable source of information within the newsroom. However, neither wanted to explain why nor intended talking further about the matter.

Spanish *Guardia Civil's* officers were responsible for migrants' deaths¹⁴³ (García Gaibar 2015).

In order to fully answer Research Question 3 (RQa-b), it is necessary to remind ourselves what the interviews with journalists have highlighted. At least two of the digital-born news media considered here – *lettera43.it* and *infolibre.es* – do not have the economic resources to distance their news reporting from that of the Italian and Spanish traditional news media organisations. As a result, they draw most of the information that they publish from a number of national and international news agencies.

Once again, only *eldiario.es* represents an exception to this pattern. In contrast with the financial difficulties experienced by the above-mentioned, digital-born news media, the successful business model of *eldiario.es*, which is based on readers' economic contributions as well as commercial revenues (González-Esteban 2014), seems to guarantee this news media organisation a certain investigative autonomy¹⁴⁴. This is reflected also in the news sources that it employs, since *eldiario.es'* news coverage of migrant border crossings benefits from a network of collaborators both at a national level and in the field such as social workers and NGO members.

Overall, the news narratives about migrant border crossings that have been analysed in this work cannot be accused of clearly supporting specific political stances or racial viewpoints. The main differences across their news

¹⁴³ This case of investigative journalism has been discussed in the Literature Review (page 44).

¹⁴⁴ As a proof of the professional independence from traditional channels of information that *eldiario.es* aims to demonstrate, its journalists actively collaborate with a whistleblowing online platform, *filtrala.org*.

narratives, which tend to be quite similar¹⁴⁵, concern the variety of semiotic modes that the news media employ to convey information¹⁴⁶. For instance, *repubblica.it* and *corriere.it* tend to develop online news articles by intertwining series of videos and pictures with texts. As a result, in these news items, the two news media report and document, at the same time, distinct aspects of the news such as rescue and landing of migrants as well as migrants' conditions and rescuers' and politicians' viewpoints.

As a consequence of the variety of their coverage, on these two news platforms the news seems to be more complete and their narratives potentially less biased. This is particularly noticeable if *repubblica.it's* and *corriere.it's* news coverage is compared with that of the Italian digital-born news media. There, in fact, news articles are generally accompanied by single news pictures (see Tables 5-6 in Data Analysis), which inevitably provide a narrow visual representation of the events.

Although similar observations can be made of the four Spanish news media, the visual and interactive content that *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es* tended to make available online in the time frame of the current study was not as rich and diversified as the one that the Italian traditional news media offered over the same period of time (see Tables 7-8 and 3-4 in Data Analysis).

¹⁴⁵ Except for *eldiario.es*, which mainly focuses on political and social news, and *infolibre.es*, which in particular covers political issues, the other six news media platforms considered here tend to provide mainstream information.

¹⁴⁶ This point has been discussed in the Data Presentation section, where it has been observed that the representations of migrants across Italian and Spanish news media depend on the variety and combination of the different semiotic modes that the news media platforms employ.

At this stage, it may be said that this work has provided an answer to the three research questions on which this study has been based. However, if Hartley's (1996) observation about the search for meanings that has been reported at the beginning of this chapter is recalled here, it will be apparent that the analysis of news items has only *evoked* news meanings. They still have to be explored, and this will be the aim of the next sections. So far, the current study has in fact proposed the representations of migrants as descriptions *tout court*. Similarly, the recognition of a war-like language in news narratives about migrant border crossings has resulted from an analytical observation of news elements and structures, including the selection of news images. It has also been based on the analysis of the interviews with journalists, who have shared their own professional and personal stances about immigration as well as the representation of migrants in the news.

It is worth mentioning that, although the search for meanings here has not been concluded yet, this study can already be seen as a contribution to an emerging area of research, in which the presence of a war-like language in the news has recently been observed and investigated by a few scholars (Montali et al. 2013; Vieira 2016; Musarò 2017). Following the news representation of migrants as 'criminals' and 'illegals' – a matter that has largely been discussed in the Literature Review – these studies have highlighted, from different perspectives, that the current public debate depicts immigration within war-like contexts and turns migrants into mere “objects of pity” (Musarò 2017, p20).

Consistently, the findings here have demonstrated that the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders are the main narrative elements of two distinct war-

like scenarios: the Mediterranean Sea, where a humanitarian crisis is actually ongoing; and, the Melilla and Ceuta border areas, where migrants attempt the 'assault' on the 'barriers' that separate Africa from Europe. In response, within these two contexts, national and European politics try to prevent migrants from crossing borders through military activities. This occurs, in the case of the Mediterranean, through a fight against human traffickers, which is carried out by means of search and rescue operations as well as diplomatic initiatives in the countries where migration originates. At the Morocco-Spain border, on the other hand, the defence of borders is conducted through the reinforcement of technological measures of surveillance as well as the introduction of further military forces on land and at sea (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015).

As Musarò (2017) has argued, the Italian government has concealed its own interest in border control and management by deploying rescue operations at sea such as *Mare Nostrum* – in this way, it could publicly demonstrate care about the safety of migrants (see also García Agustín 2008). From a broader perspective, according to Pezzani and Heller (2013), the European effort to contain migration in the Mediterranean by means of monitoring and search and rescue activities has only reflected “the *political violence* of the migration regime” (p294 – emphasis in original), which professes to rescue migrants while actually repulsing them.

In this regard, contextual sections about Italy and Spain in the Literature Review have demonstrated that meaning-making processes entailing the representation of migrants in the news already hinged on political and economic interests in the 1990s, when the European Union was legitimised as a

supranational project and the political process of its enlargement began. From a 'threat' to the strengthening of European political powers as well as national securities, in more recent times the portrayal of migration towards European countries turned into the representation of a humanitarian emergency, although this actually originated from the measures of border control that the European Union member states themselves adopted collectively after the Tampere Summit in 1999 (Triandafyllidou and Ilies 2010; Feldman 2012).

Given the complex strategy within both national and European political communication about immigration that has been reproduced by Italian and Spanish news media over time, this chapter will not try to deduce meanings merely from the language that articulates news narratives about migrant border crossings. Indeed, as Collins and Glover (2002) have pointed out, words do not have inherent meanings. They 'acquire' meaning through the repetition that influential actors such as politicians and news media deploy over time. The next sections, therefore, will adopt a broader historical and cultural perspective in order to shed light on the meanings that are inherent in the representation of migrant border crossings and will try to identify the elements of a certain colonial way of thinking that such news narratives seem to convey.

6.2 *A context for meanings*

As the Data Analysis has demonstrated, the representation of migrants in the news coverage of migrant border crossings depends on the nature of the border that they attempt to cross. Ultimately, it is influenced by the

circumstances and risks that migrants face while challenging national and European management systems at the borders. Since migrants are described as 'masses' of people, their representation in the news does not focus on migrants as individuals. Rather, the news articulates the outcome of their intention to cross borders, which always concerns European states' responses.

At the Libya-Italy border as well as across the Strait of Gibraltar, migrants are victims, and European governments are involved in their crossings of maritime borders as rescuers and "saviours" (Musarò 2017, p18). Indeed, in news narratives about migrant sea crossings, the European Union member states demonstrate a humanitarian attitude towards migration. On the other hand, at the terrestrial border between Morocco and Spain, migrants are the fighters who assault the fences separating Africa from Europe. There, the Spanish government as well as the European Union as a whole have to intervene as defenders of national and supranational territories by means of security measures and the deployment of military forces on Africa soil.

It is worth observing here that, due to the wide use of official sources and wire services in the coverage of national as well as international news, the narratives about the migrant crossings of the Morocco-Spain border that the Italian news media convey tend to reflect the viewpoint of their Spanish counterpart, and vice versa. Both Italian and Spanish news narratives are characterised by an overall lack of analysis of the historical contexts of immigration from Africa and the political responsibilities of European countries for the phenomenon.

Besides the incontrovertible worthiness of what these narratives have left aside throughout time, such an absence of information has made room for rough-and-ready descriptions of migrant border crossings while encouraging the construction of a war-like imaginary among the public through the uncritical reproduction of political language. As a result, over the period of time considered here, Italian and Spanish news narratives about migrant border crossings have impeded a serious understanding of the struggle of migrants' journeys towards Europe and have made the individuality of migrants "disappear into the images of massive movements" (Bettini 2012, p70).

If, for Musarò (2017), the lack of migrants' subjectivity as well as broader geopolitical scenarios in the news reflects a process of "moralization of the spectator" (p20), who is invited to simply develop feelings of pity for suffering migrants as 'others', in Bettini's (2012) view, such a narrative practice "reinforces post-colonial imaginaries", where "the silenced 'Other'" is systematically deprived of individual agency, dispossessed of judgement and personal consciousness, and whose actions are ultimately driven 'by desperation" (p70).

Indeed, in modern Europe, the long shadow of post-colonial thinking has marked the representation of migrants and migration more broadly, at least from the decolonisation movements that began during World War II and lasted for more than three decades. During this period of time, when, according to Smith (2003), between five and seven million people came back to their mother countries, the public discourse started distinguishing 'repatriates' from 'other immigrants' for political purposes. On the one hand, this distinction served to

reinforce a collective sense of belonging to a single nation, that of the colonialists, and, on the other hand, it categorised and separated people by “race”. In other words, although the 'other immigrants' were driven towards Europe by the labour market demand and, up to the late 1960s, they were recruited to reconstruct the cities of northern and western European countries (Boswell and Geddes 2011), migrants acquired different rights and roles within society on the basis of their “race” (Smith 2003)¹⁴⁷.

Within such a framework, in which people are divided into categories such as “race” and country of origin¹⁴⁸, Quijano (2007) would remark that the structure of western societies reflects a specific form of world domination, at least since the conquest of the Americas. At that time, on the basis of what was considered an ‘objective’ and ‘scientific’ distinction, the classification of people by “race” indeed served colonialist aims, which produced the discrimination and repression of entire cultures (Quijano 2007).

According to Quijano (2007), by means of such distinctions, the very 'imagination' of the dominated was colonised and its reproduction impeded, so that their systems of knowledge and their modes of signification of the world did not clash with those of the colonialists. One of the purposes of this form of

¹⁴⁷ Smith (2003) has also argued that such a distinction, and in particular the use of 'repatriate', may have acted as an ideological suppression of those terminologies that evoked the colonial context and thus reflected European states' embarrassment for “their failures in colonial wars” and “the end of colonial rule” (p20). Furthermore, it is worth reminding ourselves here that, already in the early 1970s, overall rising unemployment led governments to an early introduction of visas and entry requirements in order to restrict migrants' movement towards and across Europe (Boswell and Geddes 2011).

¹⁴⁸ About de-colonial thinking (Mignolo 2007), see the Literature Review (page 70).

cultural colonialism was the establishment of “a new global model of labour control” – ultimately, of capitalism. In it, in Quijano’s (2000) own words:

“...race and the division of labor remained structurally linked and mutually reinforcing, in spite of the fact that neither of them were necessarily dependent on the other in order to exist or change. In this way, a systematic racial division of labor was imposed” (p536).

According to Mignolo (2007), the western concept of *modernity* “as a universal global process and point of arrival”, which capitalism also articulates, is at the core of the Eurocentered logic of colonialism (p450). By impeding 'the dominated' (Quijano 2007) from producing culture and thus from participating in “global hierarchies of power” (Grosfoguel et al. 2014, p7), the idea of *modernity* has silenced the subjectivity and knowledge of 'the others' and has become the dominant ideology worldwide (Mignolo 2007). This form of cultural domination has been so radical that nowadays, as Grosfoguel et al. (2014) have observed: “The difficulty in the struggle against the new racist discourses is their denial of their own racism. By avoiding the word ‘race’, cultural racism claims to be non-racist” (p11).

As shown so far in this work, none of the news media platforms considered here convey explicit racist content. In addition, as reported in the previous chapters, the journalists who were interviewed tended to support their media organisations' stance, which they said was in favour of a liberal approach to immigration, and expressed individually positive attitudes towards migrants. Any accusation of disseminating racist news narratives, therefore, would

arguably be rejected by all these journalists. Nevertheless, findings have demonstrated, in line with past and present academic literature about the representation of migrants (for instance, De Cillia et al. 1999; Wodak 2006; Van Dijk 2006; Garner 2007; Magnani 2011; Quassoli 2013), that the news coverage of migrant border crossings is fundamentally biased.

In this regard, news narrative elements such as the description of migrants as 'masses of desperate people' and as 'numbers' (Bettini 2012; Montali et al. 2013; Mazzara 2015) as well as the animalisation and dehumanisation of their representations (Andersson 2014; Vaughan-Williams 2015) seem to be rhetorical devices assisting a narrative technique, which is a legacy of colonialist ideas and beliefs, through which journalists reproduce a common culture within society.

The practices and routines that determine how journalists produce and disseminate information about migrant border crossings such as the use of official news sources and spectacular pictures have been discussed in-depth in the two previous chapters. What the sections here intend to highlight is rather the background on which news narratives about migrant border crossings are built. This context, in fact, claims that borders regulate the movement of people as well as the flux of commodities on a global scale. In the last resort, borders, as the geopolitical elements through which the individuality of peoples willing to move across countries can be marginalised and repressed (Mignolo 2007; Quijano 2007; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), serve economic interests while shaping states' authority and agency over both people and goods (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Mattei 2013).

In the Literature Review, the historical and political constructions of borders have been presented with a specific focus on Italy and Spain and within the context of the development of the European Union as a supranational power from the 1990s. From a broader theoretical perspective, borders were also discussed there as a tool through which western countries have strategically organised global space and the labour market for the benefit of their economies (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that borders have also produced knowledge and culture throughout time. They have reinforced the power relations reflecting the two dimensions of colonialism, those of the rulers and the dominated (Quijano 2007; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) and have served the connection between the ethnicity of people and their exploitation in specific labour sectors. Nowadays, such a form of discrimination is still visible within western societies. For instance, the member states of the European Union seem to consider 'legal' and welcome only high-skill migrants, as they represent what their national economies need in order to be competitive in the global market (García Augustín 2008). In Mezzadra and Neilson's (2013) own words, borders:

“...are essential to cognitive processes, because they allow both the establishment of taxonomies and conceptual hierarchies that structure the movement of thought. Furthermore, they establish the scientific division of labor associated with the sectioning of knowledge into different disciplinary zones” (p16).

From this perspective, the clashes between Moroccans and Spaniards that broke out in El Ejido, in southern Spain, in 2000 are a clear example of the type of racial discrimination that can emerge from the distribution of labour within Spanish society and that can be traced backwards to the Spanish colonial activity in the Maghreb and western Africa (Martínez Veiga 2001). Similarly, in the southern regions of Italy, migrants from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa are exploited as a cheap labour force in agricultural production (Corrado 2011).

De Haas (2008) has observed that the media misrepresentation of African migrants, as well as the migratory phenomenon itself, hide the fact that both “the economies of receiving and sending countries have become increasingly dependent on migrant labour and remittances” (p1315). However, what cannot be hidden here is the ethnicity of the migrants who are irregularly employed in agriculture in Italy and Spain and, therefore, the function of filtering the labour force that borders have exerted on them. Indeed, borders are an integral part of state power¹⁴⁹ and the exploitation of poor people such as migrants is crucial to the negotiation of the costs of the commodities that European nations consume (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

As filters for the global labour market, borders have contributed to the rise of the migration crisis in southern Europe. Whether this refers to the death

¹⁴⁹ When Italy signed a treaty with Libya to prevent migrants from sailing towards Europe in 2008 (Hamood 2008; Brambilla 2014), the Libya-side of the Mediterranean, and so the border's frontier zone, became a commodity itself. In exchange for its control, Italy was willing to give Libya US\$5 billion over 20 years. It is worth noticing here that the agreement was promoted as a form of colonial reparation (De Cesari 2012).

of migrants in the Mediterranean or to the number of people succeeding in climbing the Spanish border fences in Melilla and Ceuta, the analysis of news narratives here has demonstrated that migrant border crossings act as a call for an immediate response by states, which has the opportunity to reaffirm its own identity within the geo-political context of its national borders. Furthermore, such a response aims to *contain* immigration for economic purposes rather than limiting the risks that it entails for migrants' lives. From this perspective, the representation of migrants as victims in the Mediterranean as well as fighters assaulting the border fences in southern Europe can be recognised here as a form of discrimination, which is rooted in ideological discourses of cultural domination by western countries (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Mattei 2013).

In order to demonstrate the relevance of the news representation of migrant border crossings in the articulation of such discourses, the next two sections will draw particular attention to the meanings which are inherent in the public debate about immigration. The first section will focus on the idea of civic solidarity as an attitude that has been challenged by European governments' control over immigration and intervention at the borders. In the second and final section, the use of a war-like language by politicians will be discussed as an integral part of discourses of domination, which present scenarios of increasing chaos outside state jurisdiction in order to reinforce state power and sovereignty within national boundaries.

6.3 *Before the war comes: what identity?*

Acts of solidarity towards migrants are discouraged by law, according to Fekete (2009). In particular, solidarity has been “unacceptable” for the European Union member states at least since 2002, when the EU Directive and Framework Decision on 'Strengthening the penal framework to prevent the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence' of non-EU citizens came into force (p84). In line with this Directive, the EU governments have been required “to create offences” (Fekete 2009, p84) for any form of support to migrant border crossings as well as migrant transit and residency on European territory. As a result, the idea that European citizens could be criminalised if found helping migrants spread, and this had repercussions at different levels within society. Public figures such as doctors and nurses, for instance, started assuming “immigration control functions” due to the misconception that “providing a service to someone without papers constitute(d) a criminal offence” (Fekete 2009, p89).

Actually, for fishermen, providing assistance to migrants at sea became an offence (Fekete 2009). The testimony of one of them on the occasion of the shipwreck that occurred near the Italian island of Lampedusa on 3rd October 2013 (Table 1, 1; Table 2, 1), when about 360 migrants drowned, will be reported here in order to exemplify the individual conflicts that the attempt to inhibit feelings of solidarity *by law* have produced in the people experiencing immigration first-hand. On 3rd October 2013, in fact, it became clear that the Italian 2002 immigration law – the 'Bossi-Fini' Law, from the names of the two right-wing politicians who proposed it (Allievi 2013; Dines et al. 2015) – had

damaged fishermen's positive willingness to intervene in the rescue of migrants at sea¹⁵⁰. Although the news reported that those who first attempted to rescue migrants were indeed fishermen, witnesses testified that a few vessels were seen to move away from the place where the migrant boat sank, probably due to some fishermen's fear of having their boats seized by the police – a fear that was widespread on an island whose economy was founded on fishing.

In the video interview that *corriere.it* published (Table 4, 2), one of the fishermen who actually participated in the rescue operations on 3rd October tells that he was on his vessel fishing off the harbour when he saw a 'clandestine boat' (*una barca clandestina*¹⁵¹) in need. Then he immediately adds: "I have drawn closer" (*mi sono avvicinato*) to see what was going on. Visibly moved, he also tells that, while trying to drag migrants up to his boat, he saw some of them drowning and that he cried like a child at that scene¹⁵². The fisherman, who saved the life of 18 migrants, defined it as a 'slaughter' (*scempio*): "an embarrassment the fact that nowadays such things happen" (*una vergogna che oggi succedano queste cose*).

¹⁵⁰ A few days after the shipwreck, *repubblica.it* launched an online appeal to abrogate the 'Bossi-Fini' Law (Table 3, 3 – hyperlink content). In just 48 hours, the online newspaper collected about 85,000 signatures from citizens as well as personalities in the public and culture sectors. One of the articles that *repubblica.it* published to support the initiative can be accessed at the link here: http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/10/11/news/pi_di_70mila_firme_contro_la_bossi-fini_firmano_renzi_iacchetti-68353645/.

¹⁵¹ For the use of *clandestine* in Italian news media, see the Data Analysis (page 153).

¹⁵² The fisherman explains that he could not grasp the migrants' arms that were too oily and slipped away from his hands. This was due to the naphtha that had spread around from the sinking boat and that had covered migrants' bodies.

The video testimony here exemplifies what has already been discussed in the Data Analysis for the case of Spain (see page 171). There, in the 1990s, the use of words such as 'avalanches' and 'waves' with reference to immigrants in political discourses provided the general public with the effective scenario that attempted to explain high unemployment rates in the country. In a similar fashion, in Italy an adjective such as *clandestino*, which originally referred to 'something done in secret, something hidden', has turned into a substantive, connoting the 'illegality' of migrants by means of the politicians' language in articulating the public debate since the 1990s¹⁵³.

From this perspective, according to Sciortino and Colombo (2004), in a continuous process of redefinition of meanings about immigration for political purposes, journalistic communication has been reshaped over time. In particular, these authors (Sciortino and Colombo 2004) have observed that news vocabulary and assumptions, which associate immigration with criminality as well as the idea of migrant 'illegality', entered the common language and culture in the 1990s and contributed to the dissemination of prejudices about migrants. This occurred to the detriment of different, even positive, news stories such as those about the "foreigners' participation in the labour market and more generally in the Italian economy", which "practically disappear(ed)" from the news (Sciortino and Colombo 2004, p110).

Within this complex scenario, the use of the word *clandestino* in the testimony of a man in his forties or fifties, as the fisherman quoted here, can be

¹⁵³ About the definition of *clandestino* in Italian language see also Quassoli (2013) and Faloppa (2015).

identified as a sort of linguistic heritage from a past public debate, whose racist connotation seems currently to be absent. In the video interview, not only the fisherman's intention undoubtedly emerged as that of bringing aid to migrants. He also linked 'clandestine' to 'boat' in his speech, thus restoring the original meaning of the adjective as 'something done in secret', with reference to the circumstances in which he knew African migrants often travel towards Lampedusa.

Considering the fisherman's touching personal account of the migrant rescue, it may even be argued that the use of the expression 'clandestine boat' here implies a rejection of the political viewpoint on immigration as a mere legal matter. Indeed, the fisherman's narration of the events evidences how individual experience can interfere in the production of meanings about immigration. Moreover, it can be said that, on 3rd October 2013, the man actually carried out an act of protest against the discouragement of feelings of solidarity that political discourses had explicitly and implicitly promoted since the late 1990s.

In this regard, in a fragment of a larger conversation that was reported by Puggioni (2015), a local man in Lampedusa has supported the idea that fishermen tend to help anyone in need, whatever their political standpoint and attitude towards migrants. The man also claimed: "If it happens to you to bump into a person in danger (at sea), and her safety depends on you, (your) political and demographic beliefs will disappear" (Puggioni 2015, p1151).

Likewise Fekete (2009), Puggioni (2015) has suggested that the identity of people is deeply transformed by their personal experience of "the *political violence* of the migration regime" (Pezzani and Heller 2013, p294 – emphasis in

original) and its inhumanity at the border. In particular, according to Puggioni (2015), the witnessing of the effects of immigration laws on people develops “a new configuration of citizenship” (p1153) and it is from this perspective that the procession organised by the inhabitants of Lampedusa the very next day after the shipwreck should be understood. In that occasion, in fact, the “frustration and anger” at a tragedy that “should not have happened” (Puggioni 2015, p2250) emerged as both an expression of dissension within the local community and a form of protest against the current political decisions about measures of border management. In Puggioni's (2015) own words:

“People were protesting because of the evident disregard for human life, as the many lifeless bodies testified. The protests were a clear sign that the people were distancing themselves from dominant politics by refusing to become complicit with the government in transforming their island into a site of death and its people into border death-machines” (p1115).

“It was specifically the belief that border death was closely connected with border policing and that this very policing was going to result in many more shipwrecks that made the people protest so vigorously. Contrary to the situation in other Italian locations, the people on Lampedusa were experiencing the high human cost of migration not as a distant event but as a lived experience” (p1152).

In Fekete's (2009) and Puggioni's (2015) works, political power clearly emerges as an attempt to dominate migrants' as well as citizens' behaviour and free will. From their perspectives, the civic solidarity that citizens bring to migrants at the borders, as well as in other contexts within society, is seen as

disruptive – “an act of subversion”, in the case of rescues at sea (Follis 2015, p50). As a matter of fact, if European governments have tried to instil the fear of 'the others' in national citizens by law, acts of solidarity with migrants by common people can certainly be considered as a form of direct challenge to state authority as they highlight states' inadequacy in dealing with care and protection of human life.

As both the identity and sovereignty of states depend on borders, these are responsible for creating the differences and strengthening the contrasts between 'national citizens' and 'foreigners', “citizens of a different national origin” (Bigo 2002, p67), which 'the polity' intends to manage. According to Bigo (2002), such an institutional approach to 'the others' may be ascribed to a certain conception of the state “as a body or a container” for the political activity (p65). From this perspective, borders as well as their apparatus of defence would emphasise the idea that 'im-migration' is “an outsider coming inside, as a danger to the homogeneity of the state, the society, and the polity” (Bigo 2002, p67).

Indeed, borders allow binary language to play a role in the discrimination against people. As Llorente (2002) has pointed out, in fact, the binary structure of language, where almost every grammatical component has its opposite, leads to the qualification of nouns and adjectives as positive terms – ‘national’, for instance – while devaluing the opposite words (p39), such as ‘foreigner’. However, Llorente (2002) has advised against taking such oppositions as inherent in language. Rather, the definition of the positive and negative

meanings connected to opposite words “is the work of the dominant ideology” (Llorente 2002, p40).

Accordingly, as demonstrated in the Literature Review, the representation of migrants has changed over time at a European level as the result of shifts in the political attitude towards immigration. In particular, the paternalistic approach that politicians started promoting after the Arab Spring in 2011 conceptually moved from the idea of the 'illegality' of migrants to that of their protection as victims. Within this latter framework, European governments' hostile attitude towards immigration has been concealed behind humanitarian activities such as *Mare Nostrum* (Musarò 2017), which have actually allowed states to monitor migrants' journeys across the borders while exerting authority over their lives¹⁵⁴. The subsequent, current rise of a war-like language in political discourses seems to imply a further, ongoing change in states' attitudes towards immigration, which may have the purpose of justifying future more radical interventions in migration-related matters.

In line with Bigo's (2002) observation about the necessity of perpetrating conceptual distinctions between national and foreign citizens by states, it is argued here that the *negative* representation of migrants in political discourses, whether migrants are portrayed as criminals, illegal people, or victims – even 'fighters' –, as highlighted in this study, serves to preserve states' *positive* identity and reinforce their own authority in the global society.

¹⁵⁴ After being rescued at sea, migrants are usually sent to detention centres or repatriated (Andrijasevic 2010; Brambilla 2014).

Indeed, as the analyses of news items about the migrant crossings of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders have demonstrated, both the Italian and Spanish governments dominate news narratives as positive actors. In the first case, the narration of institutional initiatives such as search and rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean contributes to the production of a scenario in which the state does care about migrants. In the case of Spain, on African soil, it is rather the Moroccan police force that is identified as violent against migrants in the news (Andersson 2014; also Di Renzo, forthcoming). The *Guardia Civil* and the *Cruz Roja*, as representatives of the Spanish government, are in contrast represented as the protector of the state as well as carers of migrants.

In sum, this section has suggested that the current turn in the news about migrant border crossings towards war-like narratives reflects a political willingness by European states to strengthen their own identity and power by means of the defence of national borders while impeding citizens' acts of solidarity with, and feelings of sympathy for, migrants. If citizens are found to be transgressing against the immigration law, they are legally prosecuted¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁵ The news has recently highlighted how such a form of conflict between state power and citizens' free will and a sense of solidarity is developing. In 2017, two young people, who were found to have helped migrants in the crossing of the Italy-France border, were arrested and taken for trial in France. On that occasion, they claimed the right for people to move freely across borders and blamed European states for the inhumanity of the current measures of border management and control. News articles about these two cases can be accessed here: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/04/french-farmer-cedric-herrou-trial-helping-migrants-italian-border>; <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/faits-divers-justice/8-mois-de-prison-requis-nice-pour-avoir-aide-des-migrants-1491346014>.

Furthermore, as will be discussed in the next and final section, the war-like language that currently articulates political discourses about the immigration crisis in southern Europe also seems to facilitate the reception of the use of military means for humanitarian purposes among the general public. Ultimately, while hiding ongoing and serious violations of the human rights of migrants at the borders as well as in detention centres across Europe (see also Dauvergne 2008; Fekete 2009), the war-like language in news narratives about migrant border crossings seems to be redefining state authority to the detriment of migrants' own lives.

6.4 *About war-like language*

By involving people at a deep emotional level and producing collective responses, war is a system of meanings as well as a “laboratory of social and cultural practices” in itself (Montanari 2004, p9). From this perspective, narratives of war prepare the ground for further transformations of cultural values within society (Montanari 2004). At a state level, on the other hand, every war can be defined according to specific characteristics, which concern the different actors on the battlefield, the power relationships between them, and their actual war strategies (Shaw 2005). Furthermore, wars entail the production of “discursively constructed 'imaginaries'” (Shaw 2005, p68), which are shaped in public discourse through the representation of the military force that war protagonists bring in the battlefield and the military actions that they perform there (see also Calhoun 2013).

Within this framework, humanitarian intervention is considered a modality of war (Shaw 2005; Fassin and Pandolfi 2013), which is usually legitimised by discourses about the 'moral obligation' to save lives (Fassin and Pandolfi 2013; Murarò 2017). As a matter of fact, in the Mediterranean, the 'exceptional' circumstances of migration and the urgency of providing a humanitarian response to migrants' perilous journeys justifies the introduction of military measures at the border (Bettini 2012).

As a result, immigration has been moved to the realm of military matters in public discourse and the news representation of 'desperate people' on crowded boats in distress at sea has started reinforcing the war-like scenario that serves the current European political debate about immigration. In this regard, while emphasising the emotional aspects of the news, visuals portraying the occurrences at both the maritime and terrestrial southern borders of Europe strengthen the idea that 'something has to be done' in order to alleviate the migratory crisis (Puggioni 2015).

The humanitarian approach here reveals that official news sources currently frame military intervention at the border as an expression of positive attitudes towards 'desperate' people, who are represented as victims of poverty and war as well as human traffickers (Chouliaraki and Blaagaard 2013; Musarò 2017). Furthermore, the language of institutional actors reflects a substantial division of *humanity* between rescuers and soldiers – the “heroes” (Musarò 2017) – and victims, who are “objects of pity” (Musarò 2017, p20).

In political discourses, migrant border crossings are articulated as a phenomenon that alters the 'natural' order of states (Bigo 2002) and, as they

are a threat to it, such crossings make politicians produce 'catastrophic narratives', in which largely de-contextualised information such as numbers and statistics are disseminated with an overall absence of thorough analyses (Bettini 2012). The 'exceptional' circumstances represented in these narratives demand urgent responses and justify humanitarian intervention, and in due course, war-like actions.

It is worth observing that the very meaning of 'the human' is at stake here (Calhoun 2013). According to Calhoun (2013), the way in which the news simplistically portrays migrants as numbers and just in emergency contexts reflects the states' tendency to assist them as an 'obligation' – as “they are human, not because we share some more specific civic solidarity with them” (p33). Paradoxically, humanitarian operations express a form of states' detachment from sympathetic feelings towards migrants and rather reflect the assumed 'moral obligation' to save lives by states (Fassin and Pandolfi 2013; Murarò 2017). Feelings of sympathy for migrants do not belong to such a 'humanitarian' attitude. At the same time, as demonstrated in the previous section, citizens' acts of solidarity with migrants are prosecuted and criminalised. Since they actually challenge the 'natural' order of states, they are potentially subversive in society. If it were otherwise, there would be no need to punish citizens by law when they rescue migrants at sea or help them cross borders.

Such a conservative attitude within politics for the sake of state preservation can also be exemplified through the case of the so-called 'left-to-die boat', which has been scrutinized by Follis (2015). This refers to the events

that occurred in April 2011, when, in the attempt to reach Lampedusa from Libya, 72 migrants remained on a boat in distress in the Mediterranean for two weeks. Several maritime authorities and international vessels were aware of the migrant boat's presence at sea; however, none of them took the responsibility to rescue the migrants and only nine of them survived.

In her investigation of the 'practice of human rights' in the 'left-to-die boat' case, Follis (2015) has analysed the official documents that were produced at a European level from both a legal and a semantic perspective. There, according to Follis (2015), political discourses avoided focusing on individual states' responsibilities and rather drew public attention to the activity of human traffickers in the Mediterranean as the cause of the migrants' deaths (p52). In those documents, the idea of state responsibility was framed in terms of the 'duty' to search and rescue people at sea and, since such a duty was 'unmet', what occurred in the 'left-to-die boat' case was the collective 'failure' of the European governments in rescuing migrants' lives (Follis 2015, p54). In conclusion, Follis (2015) has pointed out that:

“Failure, as opposed to a violation or abuse, suggests that something just broke down, rather than that there is a guilty party (...) Not wanting to blame anybody means that there is no call to punish those responsible, nor a way to demand that they provide any kind of compensation to the survivors of the left-to-die boat or the families of the dead” (p54 – emphasis in original).

Follis (2015) has also observed that the official documents about the case highlight the European states' attempt to reframe the debate about their

responsibilities for the lives of “vulnerable others” in terms of “a pedagogy of learning from failures” (p54). Their political discourses about a need for the 'redistribution' of responsibilities in the field of human rights protection among the European Union member states emerge in those documents as a symptom of the contemporary changes occurring at a state level (Follis 2015, p54).

According to Sassen (1996), processes of negotiation of state authority and agency began with the adherence of individual governments to the European Union as a supranational power. On that occasion, in fact, the protection of human rights within national boundaries was moved in the realm of the 'universal human rights codes' (Sassen 1996, p28). In other words, while transferring a part of their *authority* to the new-born political institution, individual states started conveniently negotiating the defence of human rights on national territories – their *agency* – with the other members of the EU.

In Sassen's (1996) view, immigration is a discursive 'tool' that states traditionally employ to redefine their powers and roles within broader political scenarios. According to Bigo (2002), on the other hand, immigration serves as a justification for politicians' *authority* over both national territories and their boundaries. Indeed, the assumed existence of such authority is one of the 'myths' on which politicians commonly build their rhetoric and within which they articulate narratives about the risks of an unrestricted immigration¹⁵⁶.

In the search for meanings in news narratives about migrant border crossings, the link to Barthes' semiotics and explanation of myths (2000) is not

¹⁵⁶ In Bigo's (2002) words: “The myths are the way (politicians) frame their everyday explanation of the political and social world and the way they see their own struggles and values” (p69).

arbitrary here. Barthes (2000) has demonstrated that the social construction of myths depends on meanings whose relationship with reality is conventional. Meanings are in fact conveyed through written or visual texts that, for their part, have been connoted by historical and cultural contexts. As texts are not intrinsically meaningful, the meanings that they disseminate should be intended as the result of uninterrupted processes of signification throughout time. Myths, on the other hand, dispossess such qualities of texts, and so their meanings, from the historical processes of their 'fabrication', since their aim is to turn certain ideas into immutable and ever-existing realities (Barthes 2000).

From this perspective, modern states are myths themselves. Their existence largely depends on the definition of borders for economic reasons as well as the bureaucratic implementation of laws and documents such as passports, which started being employed in order to provide states with the legal control over people's movements (Torpey 1999). Throughout time, however, the 'fabrication' of states has been emptied of its historical attributes in public discourse and, as a result, states are nowadays largely taken for granted (Torpey 1999). As in any other myth, the complexity of their existence is given as 'a statement of fact' (Barthes 2000), which does not require any further explanations. Furthermore, states' authority over populations can be explained through a renewed idea of nativism (Torpey 1999), which ties people's identity to territories while implying that human beings are not equal by birth.

Within the contexts of migrant border crossings that have been explored in this study, the defensive attitude of the European Union member states towards immigration reflects one of the functions of the "myth-state", which is its

own preservation. In the attempt to redefine their own authority to the detriment of migrants' lives, states are currently negotiating their agency within a more collective scenario of immigration management (Bettini 2012; Calhoun 2013), which employs humanitarian interventions as military actions. According to Bettini (2012), the war-like narratives that politicians disseminate may have already been accepted by the public, and the meanings that they convey assimilated, if the way in which the migration crisis in the Mediterranean is represented in the news has somehow already become 'normal'.

In addition, it is worth considering that the reasons behind military interventionism, which are strategically filled with values and principles such as care for and protection of human lives, hide the political attempt "to evade the consequences of the death of politics through a search for moral absolutes" (Hammond 2007, p38). According to Hammond (2007), in fact, the ever more frequent use of military approaches by governments worldwide reveals an utter 'crisis of meaning' within modern societies (p36). From this perspective, the war-like language through which Italian and Spanish institutional news sources discuss migrant border crossings can be interpreted as an effort to create social cohesion (Hammond 2007, p22). Nevertheless, such a cohesion both explicitly and implicitly revolves around anti-immigration themes, which serve to reinforce state power, and so its myth.

In conclusion, news narratives about migrant border crossings have been discussed here as a fertile ground for the production of meanings in ongoing processes of redefinition of states' identity, which are challenged by the migrants who attempt to cross borders as well as citizens' acts of solidarity with

them. Indeed, at present time, European states seem to be strengthening their authority over people while subordinating the human rights of migrants to the 'emergency' of the migration crisis. Here, a certain colonial thinking is at the core of politicians' war-like language, which explains the use of military means at the border as the way in which an effective, 'urgent response' to immigration can be provided.

Ultimately, the representation of African migrants 'at the border' is built on racial distinctions to the benefit of the preservation of the power and authority of states. At the same time, citizens' principles of solidarity with and feelings of sympathy for migrants are denigrated. As a result, through a process of redefinition of the "myth-state", contemporary news meanings are contributing to the formation of new societal and cultural values concerning states' authority and agency as well as their relationship with 'the human'.

In the next and final chapter, the conclusion will draw attention to the key aspects of this study and will propose a consistent and conclusive analytical framework to capture the representation of migrants and migrant border crossings in the news. The chapter will then open up to considerations about the gaps that the current research has attempted to fill and will provide suggestions about the areas of research that need to be further investigated in order to illuminate contemporary processes of transformation in journalistic practice and communication in the online environment.

7.0 Conclusion

Throughout this entire work, similarities and differences between the representation of migrants and migrant border crossings in the online news media of two different case studies, Italy and Spain, have been investigated and discussed in-depth. The framework within which findings have been contextualised was represented by a long-lasting news story of migration from Africa towards Europe, in which countries such as Italy and Spain have acted as territories of both transit and destination for migrants throughout time. Within such a narrative context, the analysis of news items articulating occurrences such as violations of human rights, deadly shipwrecks of migrant boats, and rescue operations as well as political responses at a national and supranational level has shed light on the Italian and Spanish online news media's attitudes towards migration-telling. The analysis has also highlighted the meanings that the news coverage of the crossings of the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders by migrants has disseminated between September 2013 and August 2015.

The purpose of this final chapter, hence, is to highlight the theoretical approaches and working hypotheses that have been challenged throughout the work and illuminate how potential research issues have been tackled. In particular, in this first section, the main analytical processes leading the development of this study will be summarised. In a further section, considerations about the research gaps in the field of journalism studies that the

current study has attempted to fill will be examined. Finally, suggestions about the research areas within the discipline that still need academic investigation will be provided.

To begin with, it is worth noticing that the analytical spectrum considered here has expanded towards an interdisciplinary approach to news representation over the period of this research project. This was due to the methodological issues that the exploration of news narratives in the online environment raised at an initial stage of work as well as the complexity of a highly topical matter such as immigration from Africa towards Europe, which was widely debated in national and international news as this study progressed. In order to provide a final overview of this study, it is thus important to draw attention to the main aims of the research, which were essentially two.

The first was the analysis of online news narratives about the crossings of two distinct borders by migrants from Africa towards Europe. By comparing two case studies, Italy and Spain, the borders that were taken into consideration were the maritime borders between Libya and Italy, the Mediterranean Sea, and between Morocco and Spain, the Strait of Gibraltar; and, the Spanish terrestrial border on Africa soil in Melilla and Ceuta. In the first case, news stories about the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean dominated the process of data gathering and the subsequent analysis of news narratives, due to the number and significance of the news events at that border in comparison with those occurring at the maritime border between Morocco and Spain.

On the other hand, the second research aim was the comparison of news narratives about migrant border crossings in the online versions of

traditional daily newspapers and digital-born news media in Italy and Spain. Within this framework and through the analysis of news narratives about migrant movements across the European southern borders between September 2013 and August 2015, both in terms of written and visual representations, this work has claimed that it was possible to identify the Italian and Spanish news media's attitudes toward the narration of immigration as well as the cultural meanings that the news about migrant border crossings have disseminated over time.

From this perspective, the time frame here was expected to illuminate the state of the public debate about migrant border crossings, as it was selected as a specific temporal frame within a long-lasting news narrative about immigration from Africa, of which Italy and Spain have been an integral part throughout time. Indeed, since this began just before the shipwreck near the Italian island of Lampedusa on 3rd October 2013 – which at the time was considered the deadliest event in the history of immigration from Africa – the most recent representations of migrants and discourses about migrant border crossings were expected to converge on it.

Later on, at a further stage of the research, the decision to end the time frame in August 2015 was determined by a sudden change in the representation of migrants and their movements towards Europe after Aylan's body was found on a Turkish shore, at the very beginning of September 2015. On that occasion, in fact, as the news pictures of the Syrian boy's body went viral on social media, the representation of migrants in the news entered a new phase (de-Andrés et al. 2016), which would have required the development of a

further theoretical framework in order to be included in this study. Social media, in fact, played a crucial role in the narrative change that characterised the news at that time, but a specific focus on them fell outside the scope of this work. Nevertheless, their function in the process of news production has emerged in interviews with journalists, where social media were discussed as one of the factors influencing journalistic practices such as news gathering.

Overall, the design of the current study revolved around three main research questions, each of them divided into two complementary parts. The first question intended to explore the portrayal of migrants 'at the border' (RQ1a), thus focusing on their representations in the news reporting of their attempts to cross the Libya-Italy and Morocco-Spain borders. This question also entailed the analysis of the visual representation of migrants (RQ1b). The second research question tried to expand on such news representations by looking at the news narratives conveying them (RQ2a) and any possible change in them from September 2013 to August 2015 (RQ2b).

Finally, the third question here aimed to highlight similarities and differences between the narratives of Italian and Spanish online news media (RQ3a) and, at a further level of comparison, between the online versions of traditional daily newspapers and digital-born news media in Italy and Spain (RQ3b). Given these three main areas of interest – written and visual representation of migrants, news narratives about migrant border crossings, and the contrast between the narratives of traditional and digital-born news media – and the comparison of two case studies, Italy and Spain, suitable analytical frameworks were identified.

In order to answer the research questions, the investigation of news narratives about migrant border crossings and the representation of migrants in Italian and Spanish online news media was developed on the basis of an analytical framework in which the relationship between online news narratives – the journalistic product – and their makers – the journalists – could be explored. Such an approach, which can also be considered as the main contribution of this work to the field of journalism studies, led to the design of an innovative methodology. This combines a structured set of methods for the narrative and visual analysis of news items with interviews with journalists. In this latter regard, the Italian and Spanish journalists who were interviewed for research purposes had an expertise on migration-related issues and actually worked on the production of news articles about migrant border crossings over time.

For reasons that were beyond the control of the research plan, involving at least one journalist for each of the eight news media organisations considered here was not possible. Nevertheless, the ten interviews that were arranged with experienced journalists working in six of the eight news media outlets were successfully conducted. Overall, these provided a considerable amount of information about the working practices of journalists and the processes of news production in the online environment, in both Italian and Spanish contexts as well as within traditional and digital-born newsrooms. In addition, while discussing the news coverage of migrant border crossings between 2013 and 2015, journalists shared personal thoughts about the representation of migrants in the news as well as their views on contemporary aspects of news production such as the use of news videos and social media.

The interviews revealed that what was supposed to support and improve the delivery of online news products – for instance, technological features of the Internet such as hyperlinks – has turned their daily work into an increasingly demanding set of routines. In addition, the journalists here stressed that, nowadays, there is a variety of new professional figures, such as those dealing with audio and video materials, working on individual news articles at the same time as traditional journalists. Such reflections helped the analysis highlight how online news products can be articulated through the expertise of a number of professionals, whose tasks do not concern just the reporting but also the optimisation of news contents for the online environment. The conclusion was that this inevitably affects the news representation of migrants, which can depend on the interaction of diverse written, visual, and interactive contents as well as different communicative intentions.

The second research question at the core of this study revolved around the idea that news products both convey and shape the cultural beliefs and values that are shared within society and reveal how these change throughout time (see also Hall et al. 1978; Thompson 1990). The analysis of news narratives, therefore, explored the cultural meanings that the news about migrant border crossings have disseminated and the articulation of the migration story in different Italian and Spanish online news media over a two-year period.

From this perspective, the comparison of two case studies, Italy and Spain, has demonstrated that the news representation of migrants 'at the border' has been determined more by the geographical environments entailing

the very nature of two distinct borders rather than by the cultural contexts within which migrant border crossings have been reported. As a proof of that, it has been observed that both Italian and Spanish news narratives tend to represent migrants at a given border in the same way. For instance, migrants at the Libya-Italy border were portrayed as victims and desperate people in Italian as well as in Spanish news narratives. At the Morocco-Spain border, on the other hand, in both narratives migrants were depicted as fighters and troublemakers, determined to reach Spain, and so Europe, despite the significant security measures at the border in Melilla and Ceuta.

Thanks to the twofold analysis of news items and interviews, this study could recognise and highlight that such similarities between the representation of migrants 'at the border' in the news of two distinct countries were also the result of the common working practices of journalists. In particular, the use of official news sources such as politicians, institutional actors, and major wire services largely affects the process of news production and, as a consequence, the news representation of migrants. In addition, it is worth recalling here that news media organisations in Italy and Spain tend to quote each other as reliable sources of information when reporting the occurrences at the respective border.

Considerations about journalists' practices such as news sourcing were at the core of the comparison between Italian and Spanish news narratives in both the online versions of traditional newspapers and digital-born news media. In particular, the hypothesis behind this latter distinction intended to verify whether digital-born news media can produce independent news narratives or

not. At an initial stage of research, the current study suggested that this type of news media platform might represent a channel of information that potentially challenged the news narratives proposed by mainstream news platforms. However, as the analysis has then demonstrated, the opposite was the case. Due to the economic difficulties that small news media organisations encounter, as in the case of the Italian and Spanish digital-born news media considered here, the standard of their news coverage of migrant border crossings has tended to be qualitatively inferior to that offered by major, traditional news media outlets. As observed throughout the work, only *eldiario.es* can be considered as an exception to this pattern, thanks to its innovative business model, which allows this news media organisation to produce independent journalistic investigations.

In sum, the analytical foci revolving around the three pivotal research questions that were addressed in this work have been summarised here to provide a comprehensive and conclusive framework of study. In the next part of this chapter, considerations about the research gaps in the field of journalism studies that this work has attempted to fill, at least partially, will be provided and the areas of research about the online environment that need to be further explored will be outlined.

Research claims and theoretical gaps

Throughout this study, journalism in Italy and Spain has been discussed within a cultural framework. From this perspective, both online news narratives

and the practices of Italian and Spanish journalists who actually shape them have been explored through a consistent set of diverse analytical methods, including featured elements of narrative and discourse analysis, visual analysis, hypertextual analysis, and semi-structured interviews. Such a combined research approach can be considered, in itself, the main contribution of this work to the field of journalism and media studies as well as an attempt to fill a contemporary gap concerning the problematic relationship between the news as a journalistic product and the working practices of journalists in the online environment. While highlighting both the cultural and practical contradictions affecting the news representation of migrants 'at the border' and the current performance of journalists in Italy and Spain, such a relationship has been investigated here in-depth.

Furthermore, this study has contributed to broaden academic knowledge about the Italian and Spanish news media contexts. It has provided original findings and integrated them within a detailed review of academic literature, which includes themes such as news media systems and role perception of journalists in Italy and Spain.

According to Carlson (2016), journalism is an expression of the cultural practices that, while continuously producing social and cultural meanings, connect news texts to the journalists who produce them and the audiences who consume them. For this reason, Carlson (2016) has suggested that a multi-layered interpretative approach should be employed in order to make sense of the contradictions that are inherent in journalistic practice as well as ongoing processes and changes in the culture of journalism.

From this perspective, the current study has looked at online news narratives as the site where journalists negotiate traditional practices of news reporting and ethical professional principles with the technological narrative tools that the Internet has brought in to newsrooms. According to Weaver (2015), the relationship between news contents and the practices of journalists producing them is indeed a highly under-researched area of study. This observation parallels Roses and Farias Battles' (2013) claim about the need for a more 'holistic' approach to the study of journalism culture, which should include an understanding of media systems as well as an investigation of the role perceptions of journalists.

The current work was not planned to cover these specific areas of study. Nevertheless, due to its focus on the relationship between news products and news makers and between the representation of a topical issue such as migrant border crossings on different news media platforms in two countries, the research here has been inexorably drawn to explore contextual elements of the Italian and Spanish journalistic culture such as the respective news media environments and their connection with the role perceptions of journalists.

This has been achieved through a critical review of the literature and the writing of the first of the two discussion chapters, '*Journalistic performance and news production: challenges and contradictions*'. Indeed, this specifically focused on the relationship between the news representation of migrants and the performance of journalists, which has highlighted the existence of a sort of 'communicative gap' in online news communication. Furthermore, in line with Dickinson et al.'s (2013) suggestions for future research, that chapter as well as

the section of the Data Analysis which detailed the interviews with journalists, have explored the current journalistic practices of news production in relation to journalists' reflections about their work as well as their professional role in the online environment.

Overall, the methodological approach of this work has demonstrated that the professional practices of journalists, such as the selection of news pictures and videos and the use of hyperlinks within news articles, determine the production of specific representations of both migrants and the institutional actors who are involved in news narratives about the crossings of the Italian and Spanish southern borders. Furthermore, the interviews with journalists from six different news media organisations have revealed that, in the digital environment, news visuals are exploited to draw audiences' attention to online news and thus ease their access to news media platforms, in order to increase web-traffic and commercial revenues.

In this regard, readers' preferences, which are mainly expressed by means of 'clicks' in the online environment, are constantly monitored through online metrics and analytics tools by news media organisations, and for this reason scholars have started looking at them as a significant feature of contemporary online news production (for instance, Tandoc 2014; Agarwal and Barthel 2015). Nevertheless, as observed by Welbers et al. (2016), academic literature has essentially focused on journalistic environments in the United States so far and research about the influence of readers' preferences on the decision-making processes entailing news reporting still requires an in-depth investigation beyond this country.

The involvement of audiences in news production was not one of the foci of the current study. However, thanks to the comprehensive methodological approach proposed here, the research has highlighted how audiences can actually influence online news production. Interviewing and involving Italian and Spanish journalists in the explanation of the contemporary processes of news narrative development have been crucial in this regard. For instance, a journalist working at *elmundo.es* has discussed here the effects that a viral news picture such as that portraying Aylan's body had on news coverage of migrant border crossings among news media outlets in Spain and abroad. As a result, this and other similar observations about the role of audiences and social media by journalists have enriched and expanded the overall framework of analysis.

In addition, the interviews with Italian and Spanish journalists, which took place after the analysis of news narratives was completed, allowed this study to shed light on journalistic ethics and role perceptions of journalists while focusing on practices of news production. While the analysis of news narratives highlighted that the combination of different semiotic modes such as visual and hyperlink contents had shaped the news representation of migrants 'at the border', the interview questions served to investigate the performance of journalists. In order to address the research questions, journalists discussed their work from both a professional and a personal perspective and justified their choices and behaviour in the news coverage of a topical issue such as migrant border crossings, thus providing personal points of view about their performance as members of the same professional group.

The current study has also contributed to widen areas of research entailing the interpretation of news visuals and the function of hyperlink contents, which have been explored here from a qualitative perspective. About the use of hyperlinks, an exploratory analysis has been conducted by De Maeyer (2014) in order to verify whether news links directly refer to news sources or not. In a subsequent work, De Maeyer and Le Cam (2015) have pointed out that the investigation of this online feature can reveal and reconstruct the 'traces' of the discourse that is embedded in the news, thus reflecting further layers of meanings. In the current work, such a perspective has constituted part of the theoretical framework on which the third layer of analysis has been based, within a more extensive semiotic-informed methodology.

There, an analytical approach to visual elements in online news has also been provided – its overall lack in the field of journalism studies has been highlighted by Steensen and Ahva (2015). Although the first layer of analysis proposed here does not specifically look at the interpretation of pictures and videos, it offers a consistent theoretical approach to news visuals by means of the analysis of their relationship with texts such as headlines and standfirsts.

It is worth also observing that a considerable strength of the analytical approach proposed here for specific research purposes is that any aspect of the methodology can be adapted to the analysis of any other news topic and representation in the context of online news.

Finally, as highlighted in the previous chapter, this work can claim to provide a substantial contribution to an emerging area of study, which has just

started exploring the presence of war-like language and metaphors in the news (Montali et al. 2013; Vieira 2016; Musarò 2017). In particular, Montali et al. (2013) and Vieira (2016) have observed that the use of news elements relating to war in the representation of immigration from Africa is what characterises news narratives in Italian traditional daily newspapers such as *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*. More broadly, on the other hand, Musarò's (2017) analysis has focused on the visual construction of a 'war imaginary' in the public debate by looking at how the migrant crossings of the Mediterranean are represented through institutional means of information such as the Italian Navy's press releases.

Due to its recent publication date, this latter study (Musarò 2017) has been accessed and added to the Literature Review only at the very last stage of the work. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that, while presenting an insightful account of the current representation of migrant border crossings in public communication, Musarò's (2017) conclusion has confirmed some of the findings that the research here had produced. This has been welcomed as a confirmation of the reliability of the current methodological approach as well as an indication that a possible new area of academic interest may be established soon in the future.

In conclusion, through the development of an innovative methodology for the achievement of the main research goals, this work has encompassed topics such as the relationship between news narratives and the professional practices of journalists as well as the perceptions of their professional role from a twofold comparative perspective – one concerning Italy and Spain, and thus two distinct

cultural contexts, the other focusing on similarities and differences between the journalistic work in the newsrooms of traditional and digital-born news media organisations. Across different areas of study, the findings here can be considered as the result of a consistent piece of analysis on topical issues such as the news representation of migrants and the cultural meanings that have emerged from news narratives about the migrants' attempts to cross the southern borders of Europe between September 2013 and August 2015.

7.2 Suggestions for future research

This study's comparative approach to journalism culture in two countries as well as across two types of online news media has allowed the observation of distinct processes of news production. As this work progressed, it has become clear that what actually makes news narratives different on specific news platforms is the structure of news articles and, therefore, the use and the variety of the different semiotic modes that are inserted there. As discussed throughout this entire work, it is the diversification of additional news contents such as video footage and hyperlinks that develops news narratives and connotes them at further levels of signification. If the analysis had focused merely on the written contents of news articles, news narratives could have not been critically distinguished across different traditional and digital-born news media platforms. Due to common journalistic practices such as news sourcing, in which mostly the same official sources and wire services are employed in both countries, news contents tend in fact to be quite similar.

In particular, the study here has noticed that what particularly differentiates news narratives is the way in which each news media outlet fragments its news articles into emotionally engaging pieces of information such as video footage and photogalleries, which can be accessed by audiences with heterogeneous interests according to their own preferences. As also recommended by Beckett and Deuze (2016), therefore, future research should be directed towards the study of the visual and emotional aspects of the news, as this is expected to show how journalism and areas of public communication such as advertising are actually merging for economic purposes in ongoing processes of online news production.

To sum up, this work has noticed that the 'character' of individual news platforms is determinant for the strengthening of news media organisations' presence within a highly competitive news media market. From this perspective, future research may successfully develop new areas of study by focusing on the identification and investigation of the news features that engage online readers' interests and lead them to explore news platform contents, thus consuming online news products. In this regard, suitable theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches to the dissemination and consumption of online news should also be established.

These areas of research would certainly expand our understanding of the contemporary processes of online news production, which shape both journalistic communication and culture. Moreover, in order to interpret the developments of journalism in the global digital environment, research in the field of journalism and media studies should broaden the spectrum of the

disciplines from which to draw and define new analytical frameworks. These should be multidisciplinary in essence. Indeed, it is from this perspective that this work wishes to contribute to the study of journalism.

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Annex

All Italian and Spanish news items analysed in this work are reported here as two separate lists of hyperlinks. Below, they are grouped according to the order in which they appear in Table 1 and Table 2, in the Data presentation. However, it is worth mentioning that, at the end of 2016, changes in news articles webpages were observed on *elpais.com*'s and *lettera43.it*'s websites following their restyling. Similarly, in the future, modifications may occur also on the other news media platforms.

Table 1. The Italian news coverage of migrant border crossings

1)

http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/09/30/news/sbarco_tragico_a_ragusa_annegano_tredici_immigrati-67571864/

http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_settembre_30/sbarchi-siracusa-morti_7365fe3a-29b2-11e3-ab32-51c2dea60815.shtml

http://www.lettera43.it/cronaca/immigrazione-extracomunitari-annegati-nel-ragusano_43675109590.htm

<http://www.fanpage.it/tragico-sbarco-di-immigrati-a-ragusa-annegate-13-persone/>

2)

http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/10/03/news/lampedusa_naufraga_barcone_dopo_incendio_82_vittime_fra_loro_donna_incinta_e_2_bambini_ma_mancano_all_appello_250_persone-67793321/

http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_ottobre_03/lampedusa-naufraga-barcone-migranti-e0102320-2bf7-11e3-b674-51fbe6c64466.shtml

http://www.lettera43.it/cronaca/lampedusa-barcone-naufragato-ci-sono-morti_43675109972.htm

<http://www.fanpage.it/lampedusa-naufraga-barcone-immigrati-almeno-10-morti/>

3)

http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/10/11/news/lampedusa_si_rovescia_barcone_con_bordo_250_migranti-68397578/

http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_ottobre_11/canale-sicilia-emergenza-un-barcone-malta-chiede-aiuto-ci-sono-persone-mare-f6034c24-3292-11e3-b846-b6f7405b68a1.shtml

http://www.lettera43.it/cronaca/immigrazione-barcone-si-ribalta-nel-canale-di-sicilia_43675110846.htm

<http://www.fanpage.it/sicilia-lampedusa-nuova-strage-immigrati-morti/>

4)

http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/10/14/news/letta_a_katainen_intollerabile_mediterraneo_mare_morte-68575070/

http://www.corriere.it/politica/13_ottobre_14/mauro-varranno-usati-anche-droni-trovare-barche-cariche-immigrati-clandestini-0d719136-34f5-11e3-b0aa-c50e06d40e68.shtml

http://www.lettera43.it/politica/migranti-droni-la-flotta-italiana_43675111102.htm

5)

http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2014/02/07/news/ceuta_il_libro_nero_dell_immigrazione_morti_e_respingimenti_nelle_citt_spagnole_in_marocco_-77986085/

6)

<http://video.corriere.it/spagna-migranti-cercando-passare-confine-africano-melilla/86fd2208-b6bf-11e3-ac02-19a792716bb3>

http://www.lettera43.it/cronaca/spagna-1000-immigrati-respinti-a-melilla_43675125660.htm

7)

http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/04/10/news/immigrati_altri_1600_soccorsi_nel_canale_di_sicilia-83279034/

http://www.corriere.it/cronache/14_aprile_10/sbarchi-sicilia-calabria-allerta-viminale-44715104-c081-11e3-95f0-42ace2f7a60f.shtml

8)

http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/04/29/news/800mila_immigrati_europa_collasso_viminale-84770016/

http://www.corriere.it/cronache/14_aprile_29/immigrati-viminale-conferma-800mila-pronti-partire-dall-africa-dfaecf60-cf96-11e3-bf7e-201ea72c5359.shtml

http://www.lettera43.it/politica/immigrazione-il-viminale-piu-di-800-mila-pronti-a-partire_43675128179.htm

9)

http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/05/12/news/nuova_strage_tra_libia_e_lampedusa_affonda_un_altro_barcone-85917457/

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