

Media Effects on Migration Policy Proposals

The case of Italy

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Master's Thesis

Public Administration – European and International Governance

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January 8, 2021

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Introduction

On April 21st, 2017, the then-Vice President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Luigi Di Maio, member of the *Movimento Cinque Stelle*, wrote a post on his Facebook account defining non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at sea as “sea taxi” and asked the following rhetorical questions: “Who finances them?” and “Why does he do it?” (Fanpage.it, 2018). He asked these questions while simultaneously re-sharing on his Facebook account the following blogpost by Beppe Grillo, the leader of the *Movimento Cinque Stelle*: *More than eight thousand landings in three days: the dark role of private NGOs* (*Movimento Cinque Stelle*, 2017). Di Maio uses specifically the term “sea taxi” to define NGOs hinting at the possible economic benefits they might gain from their rescuing activities. The blogpost by Beppe Grillo portrays NGOs in a specific manner, as well. In the blogpost, NGOs are described as having a “dark role” in migrants’ landings. This sentence suggests that NGOs may possibly be colluding with migrants’ smugglers. Both the two sentences alone display how migration-related issues can be subject to framing. Therefore, the difference a specific frame or portrayal can make on the perception of immigration-related issues, including NGOs’ activities, has to be considered when dealing with the topic of migration. In this regard, the media have a great deal of power in shaping perceptions.

Towards the end of 2016, NGOs operating in the Mediterranean Sea to save lives started to be portrayed differently by the Italian media. By that time, the debate around migration had become extremely tense (Musarò, 2016b). A few allegations were at the origin of this change in portrayal. NGOs were accused of colluding with migrant-smugglers on the migratory routes between Libya and Italy by the Dutch think-tank, *Gefira* (2016). *Gefira* (2016) published two articles on its website later re-launched by the Italian media. A month later, the *Financial Times* (2016) recalled these allegations directly citing a report by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, concerning possible collusions between NGOs and people-smuggling networks. This initiated a shift in how NGOs activities were perceived. Before these developments, their activities at sea were mostly perceived as positive. After these events, however, changes in the perceptions were noticeable. Scepticism spread so much that some prosecutors, such as Carmelo Zuccaro, Catania’s prosecutor, started to question these organizations (*La Repubblica*, 2017) as well as right-wing and populist political parties. In their election promises ahead of the Italian general election of 2018, these political parties featured policy proposals to limit and criminalize NGOs activities. Therefore, it is interesting to study whether the shift in NGOs portrayal in the media has influenced political parties’ proposals to limit non-governmental organizations’ activities.

Scholars (Gerard and Pickering, 2013; Kim et al., 2011; Mountz, 2010; Spina, 2014) have shown that the media have a central key-role in displaying migrants as dangerous and criminal influencing public's and politicians' views and thereby justifying the application of criminal law practices to the management of migration. Other scholars (Kinney, 2015; van Berlo, 2015; van der Woude et al., 2014) also sustain that discursively displaying immigrant groups as criminal in the media serves to legitimize the expansion of legislation criminalizing migration. Taking this a step further, the negative media portrayal of NGOs can serve to legitimize the proposal and expansion of legislation criminalizing their activities. This thesis attempts to unveil how purposely framed information regarding NGOs activities can have an effect on political leaders and their migration policies proposals. Given that a thorough study on the topic is missing in Italy, it is an interesting case to study. It is particularly interesting to study whether the shift in the portrayal of NGOs activities has influence policy proposals by the Italian right-wing party *Lega* and the populist party *Movimento Cinque Stelle*.

Consequently, this thesis poses the following research question:

Research Question

What is the effect of the shift in media portrayal of NGOs by Italian media on political parties' migration policy proposals?

In order to answer the research question, I have collected media portrayal of NGOs activities and political parties' migration policy proposals. Furthermore, the political parties' policy proposals considered will be the ones by *Lega*, an Italian right-wing party, and *Movimento Cinque Stelle*, an Italian populist party. A discursive analysis will be carried out on the collected data in the framework of the agenda-setting theory and the concept of frame. The study of this case is important both for its academic and societal relevance. From the academic point of view, this thesis would enable to test whether the media considered have had a real impact on political parties' policy proposals. From a societal point of view, this thesis would allow to shed more light on a discussed and controversial phase of Italian migration policies.

Theoretical framework

In the theoretical framework, the section first deals with the concept of crimmigration and policy-making which leads to delve into the influence media can have on migration policy-making. The media role is analysed according to the agenda-setting framework and the concept of frame.

Crimmigration and Policy-making

In Europe, scholars have researched whether migration policies are subject to a criminalization trend. Given the increase in negative reactions towards immigrants in the political and public discourses, stricter measures to migratory acts have been adopted involving the resort to criminal law at times (Berenzin, 2009; Bosworth and Giuld, 2008; Pallidda, 2009; Parkin, 2013). Such developments fit into the broader trend of *crimmigration*; a term which was first introduced by Juliet Strumpf (2006) referring to the convergence of criminal law and immigration law. Strumpf (2006) highlights how the connection between criminal law and migration law has led to inextricably associate crime control and immigration control. As a result, migration law violations have often been addressed as criminal violations. An example of this trend is the so-called ‘security package’ approved by the Berlusconi government in Italy which established that migrants residing illegally in Italy could be imprisoned up to a maximum of five years.

This crimmigration field of study has first attracted attention from Anglo-Saxon legal scholars (Chacón, 2009; Hartly, 2012; Hernández, 2013; Legomsky, 2007; Sklansky, 2012; Welch, 2012). Only recently, European legal scholars have started to embrace the crimmigration terminology. However, the need for a broader definition of the term, going beyond just the merging of criminal and migration laws, has been recognized. The term should include all those practices, discourses and policies which tend to treat and depict migrants as criminal. The process of crimmigration occurs also through crimmigration discourses and practices (Aas, 2011; van der Woude et al., 2014).

Crimmigration policy-making and legislation are believed to arise as a result of discursive depiction of migrants as social threats (Brouwer et al., 2017). The social construction of the migratory threat rests on enforcing interactions between political, public and media discourses suggesting a causal relationship between crimes and migration. The media have a central influential position in selecting topics and issues to focus on and in labelling and attributing qualities to groups and individuals (Helbling, 2013; Maneri and ter Wal, 2005). In this regard, agenda-setting theory and frame illustrate the role of media.

Agenda-setting and Frame

Agenda-setting and frame are two paradigms used both in political science and in communication. Agenda-setting, on the one hand, in communication sciences, agenda-setting is mainly a theory about media effects. Indeed, media coverage and portrayal of issues influences the issue priorities of the public and indirectly their voting preferences. Since the study by McCombs and Shaw (1972) the popularity of the agenda-setting approach has steadily grown. McCombs and Shaw (1972) carried out a study on the agenda-setting function of the media. They concluded that editors and broadcasters play an influential role in shaping political reality by choosing which type of news to display. The public is influence in how much importance to attach to a specific issue from the amount of information and frequency of a news story.

On the other hand, in political science, agenda-setting mainly deals with the limited attention of policy makers for several issues. Political agenda-setting can be considered as part of the larger policy process. This process has generally been conceptualized in terms of sequence of different phases: problem identification, policy formulation, policy adoption, implementation and evaluation (Howlett et al., 2009). Agenda-setting overlaps with the first phase of the process. Agenda-setting deals with the circumstances problems emerge as candidate for government's and politicians' attention. It refers to the process by which problems come to the attention of policy-makers. It is, therefore, about recognizing some subjects as problems requiring further government attention. Among the mass of problems existing in a society, the government and politicians single out the most pressing ones which are raised from their status as a subject of concern to that of a social problem and finally to that of a public issue. Problem recognition, however, is a socially constructed process. It involves the creation of accepted definitions of normalcy and what constitutes an undesirable deviation from the status (Howlett et al., 2009). Policy issues mostly arise on their own within social discourses, often as functions of pre-existing ideological paradigms. As such, problems come into discourse and into existence as reinforcements of ideologies (Howlett et al., 2009).

Media gradually gained more attention as a possible factor influencing the agenda of policy makers in the field of political agenda-setting as well (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Kingdon, 1984). Due to its ability to focus attention, media influence is typically seen as high in this phase of the policy process (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Esser and Pfetsch, 2004). This role is mostly defined positively: issues receiving high attention in the media agenda can obtain a more prominent position in the political agenda. However, the media also influences the political agenda by filtering and selecting specific issues that do not appear on the agenda. From a policy perspective, the media contributes to limit the scope of decision-making to only certain issues (Van Aelst et al., 2014).

It is not only crucial which issues media focus on, it is evenly crucial how the issues are presented and discussed. Among others, Kingdon (1984) stressed the importance of how these issues are discussed and interpreted. He refers to this process as ‘alternative specification’: narrowing the range of possible positions on an issue by focusing the attention on framing and frame-building. Frame effect studies assume that how an issue is presented has an influence on how it is understood by people. Framing refers to the selection of only some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more relevant in order to promote a particular problem definition. Frames *define problems* which consists in determining what a causal agent is doing. They *diagnose causes* by identifying the causes of the problem. In political news, frames have significant implications for political communication (Entman, 1993). This portrait of framing has important implications for political communication. Frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements which might lead audiences to have different reactions (Entman, 1993). In such a manner, frame can directly promote support or opposition to certain policy measures or legislative measures. How an issue is framed in the media has a potentially significant impact on public policy (Van Aelst, 2014). News media play a significant role in the process of defining a social problem (Kim & Willis, 2007). The media can “frame” an issue in a certain way. In this way, the media can lead the audience to make attributions of responsibility based on different interpretations or frames offered for the same factual content.

Media and Policy-making Process

Modern empirical research investigating the effects of mass media on policy began in the 1930s. The first large-scale study conducted by Lazarsfeld, Bernard, and Gaudet (1944) revealed that mass radio and print press media had minor consequences on people voting intentions and that the media’s influence on voter choices was mostly a result of pervasive selection and filtering. Researchers developed new theories to explain media’s influence on the policy process. One such theory is agenda-setting, which refers to the idea that media coverage of an issue leads to believe it is an important one (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Another theory called priming refers to the idea that people evaluate policies on which issues are reported in the media (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Both models assume that people form opinions based on accessible information and that media coverage increases accessibility and therefore facilitates the formation of opinions.

Further studies have found mass media to influence policy-making in a number of ways. First, they influence electoral competition by channelling campaign promises from politicians to the forward-looking electorate (Strömberg, 1999). Second, they inform backward-looking voters about

the actions taken by politicians regarding issues they might be concerned about but that are not directly observable (Strömberg, 1999). Third, media can influence policy by affecting the weight voters put on various issues in their voting choices (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Finally, access to media empowers people politically and increases the benefits they receive from government programs (Strömberg and Snyder, 2008). But media can also indirectly affect government policies through behavioural patterns of the voters by how they provide information to citizens. A better-informed and more active electorate incentivizes the government to be more responsive to emergencies.

Political agenda-setting has proven to be a successful approach in the study of the media influence on politicians and policy makers (Graber, 2005). Using different methods, agenda-setting scholars have accumulated evidence on when and how media coverage influences the issue priorities of political actors. However, the approach also has limitations. Political agenda-setting is mainly concerned with the salience of issues but tells little on how these issues have been constructed and defined. In order to have a more complete picture of how media influence law-making and public policy, studies on framing and frame-building should be taken into account. Furthermore, agenda-setting focuses mainly on the beginning of the policy process and fails to understand the role of the media in the later phases of the process. Although this thesis focuses on the influence of media in politics, ignoring that politics also can influence the media would be misleading even though this is not the focus of this thesis.

Causal Mechanism of Agenda-setting

Political agenda-setting scholars agree that media effects on political agendas are a consequence of how politicians process information. Politicians have to be informed about problems in society before addressing them (Wood and Vedlitz, 2007). In contemporary society, information often reach politicians via the media. The media can play a mediating role by collecting and summarizing lots of information. Agenda-setting effects are believed to occur when media attention for an issue temporally precedes political action and discussion upon this issue (Sevenans, 2018).

In order to establish causality, three conditions need to be met: cause and effect need to be correlated which means that the cause needs to be causally and therefore temporarily prior to the effect. Moreover, no external factor may drive cause and effect simultaneously, which would imply a spurious relationship, and the effect should not drive the cause which would imply endogeneity. There is a similarity in the basic problem of spurious relationships and endogeneity: the uncertainty about which information politicians obtain from the media. When agenda-setting studies establish media impact, it may be that politicians are actually not reacting to media coverage but to exogenous

information streams or to information that they brought to the media themselves. Therefore, the focus should be on what politicians learn from the media. By acting as a ‘megaphone’, the media influence the perceived importance of issues. It is here that agenda-effects occur. The media make it much more likely that politicians react to a certain piece of information by giving priority to it (Sevenans, 2018).

Media coverage may frame the real-world facts in specific manners. Various studies have demonstrated how media coverage stresses negativity or conflict (Soroka, 2012). News frames may moderate agenda-setting effects. Research has shown that agenda-setting happens to be stronger when news contains a conflict frame, responsibility attributions or when the frame is in line with the frame of the respective political party (Sevenans and Vliegthart, 2016). News purposely framed in a certain manner seem to be judged as more or less relevant by certain political actors. These actors might then decide to act upon the issue. The media, therefore, facilitates or reinforces political reactions upon an issue. In this frame, Sevenans (2018) deals with the concept of *relevation*. According to this concept, the media are a necessary condition for political parties acting upon an issue in all the instances in which the politicians would have not been informed about the matter had not been for the media. In practice, the politicians and political parties would have not been enabled to react and make proposals on solve the issue in all those cases where the media are the only channel via which politicians learn about a certain problem (Sevenans, 2018). A second crucial step consists in describing the motivations explaining why politicians react to media coverage. These motivations comprehend *policymaking* which consists in policy-makers attempting to solve problems. This concept will be later used in the Discussion section.

In this thesis, I plan to study whether the shift in media representation of NGOs has been a driving factor behind political parties’ proposal of crimmigration policies by *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle*. I hypothesize that growing attention for NGOs in the Italian media should precede the proposal of increasingly repressive policies. In order to analyse the effects of media representation on the Italian migratory policy-making, I plan to use the agenda-setting theory and the concept of frame outlined above.

The following hypothesis is drawn from the discussion laid out above. It aims at extending research already carried out on the influence media can have on policy proposals specifically concerning Italy.

Hypothesis:

Media representation of NGOs affects crimmigration policy proposals.

Alternative Hypothesis:

Media representation of NGOs does not affect crimmigration policy proposals

Methodology

This section describes the methodology used in conducting the case-study analysis undertaken in this thesis. I start by elaborating the rationale used to select Italy as the focus country. I then discuss the types of media selected and how they have been selected. I then move on to the criteria used to select the form of media. I then elaborate on the type of method of analysis chosen. I then describe the method of analysis used. Finally, I operationalize the thesis's variables I reflect on the reliability and the validity of this thesis.

Case selection

This thesis focuses on the case of Italy. In particular, the focus is on whether a negative shift in media representation of NGOs rescuing people at sea has had any effect on the policy proposals of two political parties, *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle*, to either block or control NGOs activities ahead of the Italian general election of 2018. In order to completely grasp the negative shift in media portrayal of NGOs, there needs to be a recalling of how NGOs got involved in rescue activities in the first place. Moreover, the recount serves the purpose of illustrating how these rescue operations were communicated either by the media or by the institutions themselves.

Since 2011, Italy has requested a more balanced costs' and responsibilities' share of the control, search and rescue (SaR) and protection tasks in the Mediterranean Sea. As a consequence of two major shipwrecks, then-Prime Minister Matteo Renzi launched the 'Mare Nostrum' operation, a military-humanitarian operation. 'Mare Nostrum' was meant to obtain more credibility and leverage at the European level and thus more solidarity support from the European Union. The operation, however, depicted the Mediterranean Sea as a permanent emergency setting through the emergency practices enacted by the government, military authorities and media. These outlets depicted the operation in two manner: through a humanitarian narrative of saving lives and through the display of militarised and secured borders. Through the analysis of news, images and videos created by the Italian Navy during this operation makes clear, the launch of 'Mare Nostrum' marks a transformative moment in Italian communication strategies. Indeed, Italian soldiers started publishing photographs and videos of the saving operations at sea. These images influenced perception of what was happening (Musarò and Parmiggiani, 2017).

Within this new perspective, border control is presented through a recurring imagery of aid, with rescued, grateful migrants receiving food parcels and water (Musarò, 2016). In this time, fearmongering headlines over immigration have been rather infrequent in all probability due to a

strategy of ‘normalisation’ pursued by the government. The Italian government has incorporated into the humanitarian discourse of saving lives the language of security and border control. Furthermore, the use of media makes clear how the media can contribute to shaping the ‘migration crisis’ as an emotional and physical phenomenon in which fears and insecurities can be used for either progressive or repressive purposes.

The display of militarised and securitised borders continues also after ‘Mare Nostrum’ operation is replaced by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, ’s Triton operation in November 2014 and then the Sophia operation. During these two missions, the Italian Coast Guard cooperated with NGOs in carrying out rescue missions. During this period, NGOs are mostly portrayed in the media as ‘angels of the sea’, saving people’ lives (Musarò, 2017). Nonetheless, in 2016, a negative shift in media portrayal of NGOs activities took place. Allegations of collusion between NGOs and migrants’ smugglers are at the origin of this shift. These allegations were first brought up by the Dutch think-tank *Gefira*, which published two blog-posts, later Italian media re-launched. A month later, the *Financial Times* recalled these allegations directly citing a report of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, concerning possible collusions between NGOs and people-smuggling networks.

On March 6th, 2017, the twenty-three-year old blogger, Luca Donadel, posts a Facebook video by the title *Truth about “MIGRANTS”* (YouTube, 2017) which he then uploads on YouTube, as well. It is an eight-minute long video in which the blogger states to have discovered that the NGOs boats go save migrants in Libyan territorial waters and bring the migrants back to Italy instead of bringing them to the nearest harbours in Tunisia or Malta. In his explanation, the NGOs do so because they are interested in what he calls the “business of migration”; term also used a few days later in a television broadcast network in prime time in a report by the title *Refugees Take-Away* (Striscia La Notizia, 2017). In the first three minutes of the Youtube video, Donadel traces the route of the NGO ships during the month of February 2017 on a map using data obtained through an automatic identification system on the *MarineTraffic.com* website, which is an online vessel tracking service, revealing to the public that the ships are all heading to a specific point at the edge of Libyan territorial waters where the majority of the rescues take place. He states that these rescue operations take place out of the Italian national waters. In such a manner, the spotlight is not on the lives to be saved at sea but on the collusion between rescuers and smugglers. The video quickly reached 60 thousand shares and two million views on Facebook as well as being broadcasted in various television programmes and political speeches. The narrative of the "business of migration" was enhanced by the comments of TV hosts, opinion leaders and experts.

This video is published shortly after a Catania prosecutor, Carmelo Zuccaro, had opened an investigation in possible cases of collusion between NGOs and human traffickers. In an interview, the prosecutor had said he wanted to “understand what game they (the NGOs) play” and again “where all this money they have available comes from” but more importantly he stated that he wanted to investigate “who is behind these humanitarian organisations” (*Repubblica*, 2017). In this interview, Zuccaro hints at a possible connection between rescuers and smuggler as well as describing rescuers as having a second objective instead of just saving lives: profiting.

Donadel's video together with Zuccaro's statements were used as de-legitimization instruments of humanitarian actors in the Mediterranean. The television program, *La Gabbia*, broadcast a television report by the title *a twenty-year-old discovers the strange routes of the ships that rescue migrants* (*La Gabbia*, 2017) reinforcing the perception that there is a real discovery of a hidden truth. On March 30th, the weekly newspaper *Panorama* publishes an article titled *an investigation into NGOs above all suspicion* which takes up the thesis of the young blogger (*Panorama*, 2017). On April 12th, a post was published on the *Movimento Cinque Stelle's* (*M5S*) website, concerning the "dark role" of NGOs in the surge in migrants' landings. "Where does this money come from?" and again “according to what agreement, are NGOs close to the Libyan coasts to fill their boats up with migrants and bring them to Italy? Who do they refer to in Libya?” are some of the questions posed in the blog post (*Movimento Cinque Stelle*, 2017). The Vice President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, the *M5S* politician Luigi Di Maio, posed similar questions on Facebook with even stronger tones. He went even as far as to compare NGOs to taxis: "who pays these sea taxis? and why does he do it?" he asks on the social media (*Fanpage.it*, 2018).

Countermedia

In this research, I will use both more traditional media and the so-called counter-media. Counter-media is the term used to refer to media which position themselves in opposition to mainstream media (Ylä-Anttila et al., 2019). These outlets should not be analysed through questioning whether the information they provide is true or false. Their news stories, indeed, are often based on real news and real facts. However, they are strongly biased given already that political issues are, to a large degree, matters of interpretation (Ylä-Anttila et al., 2019). Online partisan news outlets allow users and readers not only the possibility to consume but to produce their own media content (Atton, 2006; Chadwick, 2013; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). Counter-media employ a particular political style (Moffitt, 2016). Political style can be defined as repertoires of action (Swidler, 1986) used to politicize issues in the public. Style is analytically distinct from the substantive content of

political claims. However, content and style are interconnected given that certain content is better suited to be expressed in a political style (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). Discourse is often perceived as an element of political style (Ostiguy, 2017). This same discursive style plays a huge role in the politicization of migration: the process where anti-immigration political actors raise the issue of migration to the public sphere, make political claims, spread information and appeal to emotions to create and utilize collective political agency to oppose immigration (Horsti, 2015; Luhtakallio, 2012; Moffitt, 2016). The focus on style is employed because stylistic repertoires are central to framing populist mobilization.

In this case, the counter-media considered do not only belong to the text-based types but they also include a YouTube video which has been broadcasted on national television reports in Italy. The inter-relation between counter-media and media seems to be rather strong. Indeed, counter-media move the first allegations against NGO actions. However, traditional media are the ones giving either air or textual space to these same allegations. Traditional media, therefore, by broadcasting these allegations fall in the same representation patterns which characterize counter-media which consists in an extremely-biased construction of reality. Because of this reason (the depiction of NGOs media provides is not that different from counter-media's), they will be handled in the same manner.

Data collection

In order to produce replicable and reliable results (Toshkov, 2016), the media selection has been driven according to a few principles. First, the media had to be produced from when the first allegation was made on November 15th, 2016, to 2017 so prior to the Italian general election which occurred in the first months of 2018. The second principle was that the media had to have made some sort of allegations concerning NGOs. Therefore, any media outlet broadcasting a shift in NGOs activities' portrayal has been used regardless of the types of media. This means that there is a rather different array of media being analysed: more traditional newspapers' articles, online news blogs, television reports and a YouTube video. Although I have decided to include visual communication media, such as for the television reports and the YouTube video, the visual aspect of these documents will not be part of the analysis. The analysis will be text-based which means that only texts and transcripts will be considered as far as the videos are concerned. Both the media and the counter-media considered are accessible online. Although some articles were published in English, others, such as the television reports and the YouTube video, were in Italian. In order to make them more accessible also to non-Italian speakers, all the media originally in Italian were translated into English. The translations were carried out with the use of Italian-English dictionary in order for the translations

to be as accurate as possible. A transcript of each translated-document can be found in the Appendix 2 as well as a transcript or the link where to find the English documents. Furthermore, another appendix, Appendix 1, will also include a table containing the list of all the media considered. Although all these media will be considered equally, a distinction among them has to be drawn. While the more traditional media attempt to be as impartial as possible, media such as YouTube video and news blogpost can be subject to bias and partisanship thus making them be part of the counter-media outlets. I have purposely chosen a different array of media in order to have a bigger picture of the media coverage both in traditional outlets as in less traditional ones.

Method of Analysis

In this thesis, I will make use of discourse analysis. The analysis of discourse is also the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independently from the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to mean and serve. Discourse analysis investigates what language is used for. This type of investigation fits this thesis's purpose over the influence of specific frames. Indeed, communication can shape the world we live in. Communication draws from assumptions and accepted knowledge to make statements. Discourse, therefore, refers to the notion of knowledge which is commonly accepted. Discourse analysis look at "what" and "how" people communicate.

Through discourse analysis, I will be able the study a wide range of different types of data such as for the media. I also intend to address some methodological weaknesses often raised concerning this method, such as lack of academic rigor in that the analyst's subjective preconceptions and desired results may affect the outcome of the analysis (Orpin, 2005; Widdowson, 2000). Discourse analysis is often criticized for the risk of 'cherry-picking' which refers to authors picking specific texts to prove a point. This creates problems as far as representativeness and generalizability are concerned (Baker et al., 2008). As an attempt to avoid 'cherry-picking', I selected all the media dealing with the negative shift in NGOs portrayal in the time-span chosen. However, it shall be mentioned that it would have gone beyond the scope of this research to include all the media dealing with the shift in NGOs portrayal as a repertory or a collection of such media does not exist. Another criticism that is often raised regards small data sets. This might lead to neglect less frequent or only cumulative linguistic patterns. In this case, the data considered is not vast. However, given the specific focus of this thesis over a specific media representation event, I believe the choice of such specific and small data is justified. Moreover, the focus on a smaller data-set would allow to see how powerful and influential the media were.

Discourse analysis does not constitute a single unitary approach, but rather a constellation of different approaches. There are therefore no standard approaches to examining texts, but rather a variety of ways of how to proceed. I will specifically use critical discourse analysis which is helpful in uncovering different discourses integrated into a text as well as discursive strategies. By carrying out a critical discourse analysis of the selected media, I attempt to determine which discourses in the media prevail in migration policy-making proposals. Moreover, critical discourse analysis has been proven to be useful for the identification of different discourses/ideologies in specific policy texts and the recognition of how the proliferation of certain terms and arguments legitimises activity and structures the parameters of policy intervention (Jacobs, 2004; Fairclough et al., 2004).

In my use of the in-depth and interpretative approach of discourse analysis, a textual analysis is performed on three levels. First, I analyse the headline or titles. Secondly, I carry out a keyword analysis. Thirdly, I analyse macro-propositions. I first consider headlines because they often are the most important part of either articles or television reports being the first aspect which can grab the readers' or watchers' attention (Scacco and Muddiman, 2016). On the keywords' micro-textual level, I will analyse the choice of keywords. Analyses of keywords are typically used to identify discourses (Fairclough, 2002). The analysis of keywords is performed with the intent to determine which terms are most used and influential. The aim of analysing meanings and keywords is to establish which discursive strategy is employed. In this part, I reflect on the use of words having the same root as same words use with and without citation marks. On the macro-textual level, I analyse macro-propositions. According to van Dijk (1980, 1988), macro-propositions are the most relevant pieces of information in a text given that they are derived from local meanings of words by macro-rules, such as deletion, generalisation and construction. Such rules have omitted irrelevant details, connecting the essence at a higher level into abstract meanings or constructing different meaning constituents in higher-level events or social concepts. Thus, on a macro-textual level, analysing macro-sentences is also helpful in grasping the discourses.

All the above will allow the search for collective symbols in the text, which are a repertoire of images depicting a complete picture of society and its political landscape. These collective symbols are called *topoi*; metaphors and comparisons collectively used. These recurrent *topoi* can be considered as setting patterns either description-wise or theme-wise which might be After carrying out the coding of the media portrayal of NGOs, I will carry out the coding of the migration policy-proposals.

Operationalization

The operationalization of the independent and dependent variables is carried out as follows. **The media representation of NGOs** variable is operationalized through a selection of specific articles, TV reports and a Youtube video which are listed in the Appendix 1. **The crimmigration policies proposals** variable is operationalized through the policies proposed by *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle* ahead of the Italian general election of 2018. The policies proposals chosen refer only to those criminalizing or limiting either migration or NGOs activities given the focus of the thesis. The focus is on these two parties' proposal given that they won the majority of the votes in the 2018 election and later approved measures limiting NGOs activities through the decree-law *Decreto Sicurezza*.

Reflection on Validity and Reliability

As far validity is concerned, it can be divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity focuses on the causal mechanisms between the independent and the dependent variable. Through the use of the causal mechanism of the agenda-setting theory, the internal validity can be considered high. This case study research does not allow for its results to be generalizable which means that the external validity is rather low.

Reliability is rather high given that the manners in which the data are analysed are carefully described. This would allow to repeat the analysis in order to see whether the same results are obtained. This implies that the results of this thesis are accurate and stable. In order to allow for others to repeat the analysis, the transcripts of the data considered are provided either in the Appendix 2 as for the independent variable or directly in the Results section as for the dependent variable.

Results

Below, I elaborate on the results of the discursive analysis. Media are considered first through the three levels of analysis as crimmigration policies proposals in a second instance. The first level of analysis focuses on the headlines of the media considered. The second level of analysis is keyword-based. The third level of analysis focuses on macro-propositions.

First, I focus on the following headlines:

1. *Caught in the act: NGOs deal in migrant smuggling* (Gefira, November 15th, 2016)
2. *NGOs are smuggling immigrants into Europe on an industrial scale* (Gefira, December 4th, 2016)
3. *EU Border force flags concerns over charities' interaction with migrant smugglers* (Financial Times, December 15th, 2016)
4. *Contacts with smugglers, NGO investigation* (Repubblica, February 17th, 2017)
5. *The truth about "MIGRANTS"* (Luca Donadel, YouTube, March 6th, 2017)
6. *Refugees Take-Away* (Striscia La Notizia, March 10th, 2017)
7. *A twenty-year-old discovers the strange routes of the ships that rescue migrants* (La Gabbia, March 15th, 2017)
8. *Inquiry into NGOs above all suspicion* (Panorama, April 3rd, 2017)

Headlines such as number 1 and 2 suggest a precise interpretation of NGOs activities. NGOs are described rather directly as colluding with migrant-smugglers to the extent that the verb *smuggle* is directly used to define NGOs activities thus explicitly describing rescuers as smugglers through phrasings such as *NGOs deal in migrant smuggling* and *NGOs are smuggling immigrants*. Headlines such as number 3 and 8, although flagging some concerns over the shady behaviour of NGOs, do not go as far as the previous headlines allegation-wise. More neutral headlines are present, as well, such as for the 4.

Headlines such as number 5 and 7 suggests that there is somewhat a hidden truth which has to be revealed to the public about migrants. The use of the word *truth* and expression such as *discovers the strange route of the ships that rescue migrants* leads to think that a new truth has been unveiled. Moreover, headline 5 uses the word "MIGRANTS" in capitol letter and in quotation marks thus implying a dismissive approach thus insinuating that these people might not really be considered migrants.

Headline number 6, *Refugees Take-Away*, combines two difference perspective. *Refugees* is the term used to refer to people who have been forced to flee their country because of war, persecution or violence; the terms *migrants* and *immigrants*, on the other hand, are often used to refer to people moving for reasons not included in the legal definition of a refugee; implying they do not have the right to do so. However, *refugee* is put next to the word *take-away* which is a rather insensitive manner in which to describe the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea, especially considering how dangerous and deadly it is. The use of *take-away* implies that NGO do not act only on the basis of humanitarian reasons, but on the basis of economic ones; argument which is made also in several of the texts considered.

The second part of the analysis is keyword-based (see Table 1 for keyword search results). A count of the keywords selected has been carried out. In carrying out the keyword search, words, having the same root, have been counted separately as for the same word used in form of a noun or an adjective. Difference counts have been made also for word used in or out of quotation marks.

Words	Frequency
Bias	0
Border	5
Business	10
Collusion	1
Crime	2
Criminal (adjective)	6
Criminal (noun)	2
Crisis	2
Humanitarian	27
“Humanitarian” (in bracket)	1
Illegal (adjective)	7
Illegally	1
Illegals (noun)	2
Immigrant	3
Immigration	1
Law	4
Migrant	25
Migration	3
NGOs	49
Profit	2
Rescue	39
“Rescue” (in bracket)	9
Smuggle (verb)	3
Smuggler	13
Smuggling networks	3
Taxi	2
Territorial waters	18
Traffick (verb)	2

Table 1: keyword search results

The most used word is *NGOs* (49 times) which gives already the impression that the main focus of these media is on non-governmental organisations. NGOs themselves or activities have been often defined through the use of words such as *rescue* and *humanitarian*. These two words have been used both in and out of quotation marks. The word *rescue* (used 39 times out of quotation marks and 9 times in quotation marks) refers to the NGO activity of saving people at sea from a dangerous situation while *humanitarian* (used 27 times out of quotation marks and 1 time in quotation marks) is used to define NGOs themselves as involved with reducing suffering. Although the use of this words might provide a positive point of view, the use of quotation marks lead to suspend the positive meaning of the words used.

The words having the same root but counted separately are the following.

As far as *migra-*

- Migrant (used 25 times)
- Migration (used 3 times)
- Immigrant (used 7 times)
- Immigration (used 3 times)

Migrant refers to a person moving from one place to another so *migration* refers to the movement of large numbers of people (IOM, n.d.). *Immigrant* refers to a person who has come to live permanently in a country that is not their own so *immigration* refers to the process itself of coming to live permanently in a country that is not their own. The use of *immigrant* and *immigration* has a more negative connotation because it projects more the idea of people ‘coming in’. The word *refugee* is once in a headline in juxtaposition to an insensitive expression (*refugees take-away*) and four times in Luca Donadel’s YouTube video where he stresses that the majority of the people crossing the Mediterranean Sea by boats are not the eligible for the granting of the refugee status; the word is used to stress what the people on the boats are not. No positive or more neutral expressions to refer to people crossing the Mediterranean Sea are used. By counting all the times the *migra-* root has been used (38 times), *migra*-related words are the second most used words.

Words used either as adjectives or nouns are the following.

- Criminal (adjective) (6 times)
- Criminal (noun) (2 times)

- Illegal (adjective) (used 7 times)
- Illegal (noun) (used twice)
- Illegally (used once)

Both the two adjectives (*criminal* and *illegal*) and the two nouns are mainly used to refer to the following two groups:

- Smuggle (3 times)
- Smuggler (13 times)
- Smuggling networks (3 times)
- Trafficker (10 times)
- Traffick (2 times)

All these three categories of words refer to the realm of illegal activities. The third most used word in all of its component is *smuggle* which refers the crime of bringing or sending goods or people illegally and secretly into a country.

The keyword search has been insightful for several reasons. First of all, how many times a word is used can give an idea of what the main general focus of the media is. Moreover, the use or absence of quotation marks expose how these specific words and their horizons of meaning are framed. Although the focus of the keyword analysis was on frequency, collocation of the words has its importance, as well; in this case, most importantly the use of adjectives such as *illegal* and *criminal*. The first adjective has often been used to define migration and/or non-governmental organizations' rescue activities while the second has been used either to define migrants' smugglers or rescuer. Already here, a sort of conceptual overlapping between the smugglers and the rescuers takes place as if they had the same role or should receive the same blame.

Words such as *business* (10 times), *profit* (2 times), *taxi service* (2 times) are present even though less frequently than those considered above. The use of these terms suggests that NGOs are carrying out their rescuing mission out of economic interests. Words such as *business* and *profit* throw the NGOs activities in a complete different field than the one they operate in which is the humanitarian one. Defining their actions as *taxi service* is a debasement of their actions. It does not include the humanitarian aspect one more time. As far as location terminology, words such as *borders* (5 times) and *territorial waters* (18 times) are also used. These words are used to make a distinction

between the Italian border and the Libyan territorial waters. It is also through the use of such words that the narrative of border protection and security is achieved.

The third part uses the macro-proposition analysis. In this section, the data have been divided according to following two main thematic codes: (1) how NGOs activities are described and (2) the relations between NGOs and institutions/laws. These two broad thematic codes were purposely chosen in order to collect as many data as possible from the articles considered.

1. How NGOs and their activities are described

- *NGOs involved are an indispensable part of the smuggle route to Europe* (Gefira, November, 15th, 2016)
- *“humanitarian” organisations* (Gefira, November 15th, 2016)
- *It looks like the “rescue” is a part of a well organized hazardous human trafficking operation* (Gefira, November 15th, 2017)
- *We would not be surprised if their motive were money. They may also be politically driven* (Gefira, December 4th, 2016)
- *these organisations are managed by naïve “do-gooders”* (Gefira, December 4th, 2016)
- *The EU’s border agency has raised concerns about the interaction of charities and people smugglers operating in the Mediterranean* (Financial Times, December 15th, 2016)
- *“We want to understand who is behind all these humanitarian associations that have proliferated in recent years, where all the money they have access to comes from and, above all, what game they play”* (Repubblica, February 17th, 2017)
- *humanitarian ships [...] would lend themselves to being taxis* (Repubblica, February 17th, 2017)
- *Therefore, Corriere which writes that [migrants] were saved in the strait of Sicily is just a colossal fake-news* [Luca Doandel, March 6th, 2017)
- *who pays for this game?* (Luca Donadel, March 6th, 2017)
- *taxi service* (Striscia La Notizia, March 10th, 2017)
- *There is probably a business and there is someone who profits from this situation* (Striscia La Notizia, March 10th)
- *business of migration* (La Gabbia, March 15th)
- *NGOs ships are believed to go a few miles from Libya to pick more people up and fuel the “business of migration”* (La Gabbia, March 15th, 2017)
- *non-governmental organisations do whatever they want* (La Gabbia, March 15th, 2017)

- *No effectiveness therefore from a humanitarian point of view (Panorama, April 4th, 2017)*
- *This suggests that the smugglers know the routes to follow to encounter with the humanitarian boats (Panorama, April 4th, 2017)*
- *The senior official declare that “migrants seem to receive instructions and guidelines on how to avoid to give information to the Italian police regarding the network of traffickers”*

2. Relations between NGOs and institutions/laws

- *Whatever the motives of these NGOs their behaviour is illegal (Gefira, November 15th, 2016)*
- *NGOs, Italian Coast Guard and smugglers coordinate their actions (Gefira, November 15th, 2016)*
- *NGOs, smuggler, the mafia in cahoots with the European Union have shipped thousands of illegals into Europe under the pretext of rescuing people, assisted by the Italian Coast Guard which coordinated their action (Gefira, December 4th, 2016)*
- *Their actions are criminal as most of these migrants are not eligible for being granted asylum (Gefira, December 4th, 2017)*
- *The EU’s border agency has raised concerns about the interaction of charities and people smugglers operating in the Mediterranean (Financial Times, December 15th, 2016)*
- *Frontex also criticised charities for failing to help with investigations into people smuggling by refusing to collect leftover evidence from rescued boats (Financial Times, December 15th, 2016)*
- *heavy allegations by Frontex hypothesizing a “collusion with smugglers”. The judiciary is now investigating this topic (Repubblica, February 17th, 2017)*
- *According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a treaty also signed and ratified by Tunisia, people rescued in international waters must be brought to the nearest safe harbour which, in this case, is that of Zarzis, Tunisia (Luca Donadel, March 6th, 2017)*
- *lack of governance of this complex phenomenon and here I highlight the lack of Europe in managing the phenomenon (La Gabbia, March 15th, 2017)*
- *Frontex talks about migrants who received “clear indications on the direction to follow to reach the NGO boats” upon departure. (April 3rd, 2017)*

According to the first code of analysis, set of macro-propositions unveils how the media considered portray NGOs. The media portray the non-governmental organizations as intentionally or unintentionally contributing to the activities of migrant-smuggling networks. In the instances in

which this depiction is not present, however, they are still described as unprepared and unprofessional *naïve do-gooders* who have good intentions but culminate in doing damage.

According to the second code of analysis, NGOs are often portrayed as the subjects of criminal investigations by the Italian judiciary and of concerns by Frontex over some anomalies in the NGOs behaviour.

From this collection of macro-propositions, the perception of NGOs causing or contributing to a pull-factor and colluding with smugglers can be drawn. These perceptions have served as an important justification for criminal and related administrative measures instituted against NGOs. It has also put NGOs at risk of persecution by public authorities and had made them susceptible to public attacks and acts of vigilante violence.

As far as the policy proposals, instead, I will consider *Lega's* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle's* selected parts of their electoral political programs with regards to migration and NGOs. Election programmes can be rather unspecific and general. The main focus will be whether the depiction of NGOs and migration has resemblances to the media' one. In order to investigate whether a patterns of language use of NGOs is present, the same coding process, as for the media, will be used. I will first analyse the headlines of the sub-categories proposals related to migration and NGOs. Then, I will carry out a keyword analysis, using the same keyword I used for the media analysis. Finally, I will carry out a macro-sentence analysis.

***Lega's* policy proposals**

International protection

- Revocation of the Renzi-Alfano agreement on the rules of engagement in the Triton operation
- Evaluate the possibility of setting up reception centres in safe countries close to Libya under the aegis of the UN under Italy's proposal
- Refusal of landings for NGOs positioned on the edges of the Libyan territorial sea waiting for shipwrecks to happen alarm over self-induced shipwrecks and which is a prelude to the exploitation of illegal immigration. It is also forbidden to disembark from NGO ships for passengers who do not have identification documents
- Approve the DDL 3657/2016 proposed by *Lega* on the changes to the procedure for the recognition or revocation of the refugee status, which allows for the abolition of the territorial commissions and the Honorary Justice of the Peace, for the purposes of saving money and speeding up the granting procedures in compliance with constitutionally guaranteed rights

- Loss of the right to apply for international protection and the revocation, if the protection has already been granted, in case of commission of crimes such as crimes relating to terrorism, drug dealing, robbery, violence, damage, occupation of buildings and land, as well as revocation of also benefits in case of non-compliance with the rules of immigration reception centre

Crime of irregular immigration

- Establishing of new specific criminal offences aimed at foiling international organizations for the trafficking of human beings and expanding the right to use evidence even outside of that collected by the judicial police, including also evidence from other European countries judicial police, for the fight against illegal immigration given the extra-national nature of illegal behaviours and the need to foresee terrorist acts.
- Establish the right for the judicial police to collect evidence on the fight against illegal immigration through the presence of police personnel on board of NGOs and prohibit disembarkation for those NGOs opposing this measure.
- Expulsion of non-EU prisoners with the right to make agreements with countries of origin during the period of detention and expulsion with accompaniment.

(LegaNord, 2018)

Movimento Cinque Stelle's policy proposals

Stop the Immigration Business

- Irregular repatriation for undocumented persons
- 10,000 people to be hired in the territorial commissions to assess in a month as in the other European countries whether a migrant has a right to stay in Italy or not

(*Movimento Cinque Stelle*, 2018)

The sections selected are those directly focusing on NGOs and migration. *Lega's* headlines are two: *international protection* and *crime of illegal immigration* while *Movimento Cinque Stelle's* headline is just one: *stop the immigration business*. It worth noticing that the *Movimento Cinque Stelle* electoral programmes is just a bullet-point list of the most pressing issues to solve; migration being one of them. This is the reason behind the short section on migration.

In the second *Lega's* headline, the expression *crime of irregular immigration* is used. Immigration is firstly defined as irregular and, as such, is defined as a crime. Therefore, it implicitly implies that immigration is a crime and is illegal. *Movimento Cinque Stelle's* section is under the title

stop the immigration business where immigration is framed as a business, resembling some media expression way of referring to migration.

As far as the keyword analysis, I searched for the same keywords as when coding the media. Yet, just some of these keywords were found: immigration (7 times), illegal (4 times), crime (3 times), NGOs (3 times), business (1 time) and traffick- (1 time). It is worth considering that the texts of the parties' policy proposals are fewer than the texts of the media thus the less frequent use of these keywords might be traced back to this reason. However, patterns in the frames given to migration and NGOs are identifiable. The adjective *illegal* has also been used to define *immigration* directly or migrants' behaviour as the word *business* is used to define immigration.

As far as the macro-sentences analysis, the *Movimento Cinque Stelle* election programme does not provide any specifics except for what it is referred to as the *immigration business*. As far as the *Lega's* election programme, there are some more specifics. It contains more measures which would shed light on whether the media have impacted perception over migration and NGOs activities. Indeed, some of the proposals include to block NGOs from dock in Italian harbours if they have been into Libyan territorial waters. The reason behind this measure is that NGOs in Libyan territorial waters tend to exploit illegal immigration. Moreover, identification documents are proposed to be made mandatory for rescued people in order for them to be allowed to disembark on Italian territorial waters. New measures and new criminal procedures to prevent international organizations from trafficking human beings are proposed as well as using evidence collected also by other European countries' judicial police forces against illegal immigration. Finally, another striking measure is the proposal to force NGOs to have judicial police personnel on board of NGOs in order to control their activities and prohibit. All NGOs not complying with this measure would be prevented from docking.

The proposals use expressions both as keyword and as macro-sentence which fit into the narratives similar those of the media. The narrative of immigration as a business where NGOs are profiting is present as well as several references to the narrative of border securitization and protection. These series of proposals provide a specific frame of NGOs activities. NGOs are described as *trafficking human beings* or as not following the rules by going outside of Italian territorial waters. In the following Discussion section, the interconnection between the media considered and these proposals will be outlined.

Discussion

This thesis explored the effect of a shift in media portrayal of NGOs activities on migration-related policy proposals. This section will discuss the results of the analysis in the framework of the agenda-theory and the concept of frame. The results of the critical discourse analysis show that the discourses the media have used to define activities and NGOs more in general are similar to how these organizations are described in the two parties' electoral programmes. Several patterns are identifiable. First, I will use the agenda-setting theory and then I will make use of the concept of frame.

In this thesis, I use the agenda-setting theory to investigate how concrete news cues transfer to the political agenda. The data collected show how the media can be a sort of source of inspiration for politicians and political parties. In this specific regard, agenda-setting effects occur when media attention for the negative portrayal of NGOs' activities temporarily precedes political action and proposals on the issue itself.

The media considered in this research acted as a 'megaphone' influencing the perceived importance of the issue. The media has led politicians and political parties to react to the news about a possible collusion between NGOs and smugglers. In broadcasting the piece of information, the media has framed the information itself by presenting it and defining it negatively and making several allegations on the conduct of the non-governmental organizations. The negative frame given to NGOs activities has been later used by Italian politicians, for instance in the case of Luigi Di Maio as presented in the Introduction. Indeed, the then Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies uses the depiction and allegations provided by the media analysed in this thesis to attack NGOs directly.

The agenda-setting effects appear to be stronger when the media contain a rigid frame, responsibility attributions or when the frame is in line with parties' ideology (Sevenans, 2017). In this case, the media considered portrayed a depiction of NGOs rather subjective and blamed NGOs for the deaths of migrants crossing the Mediterranean either accusing them of colluding with smugglers or of not helping with investigations into people smuggling networks. These accusations were soon used by *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle* which questioned NGOs' motives. The fact that the news of the allegations of collusion between NGOs and smugglers was framed negatively was judged as being rather relevant by the *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle*. Indeed, the two parties had been anti-immigration even before this shift in NGOs portrayal. Therefore, the rigid frame over collusion together with considering NGOs responsible for the deaths of migrants at sea were met positively by *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle* given that they were in line with the anti-immigrant party ideology.

In analysing the political reaction to the shift in NGOs portrayal, the media can be considered as the necessary condition for the *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle*'s policy proposals limiting NGOs' actions. The media considered reveal information unknown up to that point. Indeed, the media analysed in this thesis attempt to portray the NGOs activities as questionable through the use of the *MarineTraffic* website. They say that NGOs behave illegally by rescuing migrants in Libyan territorial waters. This refers to the concept of *revelation* (Sevenans, 2018) which happens when the media are the only channel via which politicians learn about a certain problem. In this framework, if the media had not spread the information regarding NGOs rescuing activities, politicians and political parties probably would not have taken action upon it. After these revelations by the media, politicians started proposing policies through the use of expressions already used in the media. This has happened because the media have not only spread information coming from other sources but they have spread information on what would otherwise not be produced at all. Indeed, it is the think-tank *Gefira* that alleges the collusion between rescuers and smugglers, at times through the use of strikingly partial and biased statements such as that "NGOs involved are an indispensable part of the smuggle route to Europe" (*Gefira*, 2016). Not this last statement, but the whole process of using *MarineTraffic* can be considered as investigative journalism where news outlets denounce certain practices or problems. Therefore, it is valid to assume that the political effects and reactions of such types of coverage are truly caused by the media. Before the shift in media portrayal, neither right-wing politicians nor populist politicians and parties were proposing measures limiting and controlling NGOs activities. After allegations were made, this changed. Therefore, the media used in this thesis, therefore, are classified as the sources from whom politicians learnt about this issue (Sevenans, 2018). This helps to sort out the problem of spurious relationships and endogeneity. As far as agenda-setting, indeed, the problems of spurious relationships and endogeneity have been raised.

As already explained, before any allegation was made, NGOs were positively portrayed. However, following the media' allegations, a shift in the portrayal happened; the media initiated therefore a different display of NGOs activities which was reflected in politicians' electoral programmes through the use of similar macro-texts and the juxtaposition of keywords together: both the media and in the political programmes words such as *criminal* are used to describe either all the words having migra- as a root: thus *migration*, *immigration*, *migrant* and *immigrant*. The media can be perceived as the first-mover of certain changes on the political agenda of *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle*. NGOs are framed as favouring illegal immigration and thus committing a crime. Their activities are framed at best as facilitating smugglers' actions and at worst as increasing the number of death of migrants.

Referring to the concepts of *policy-making* (Sevenans, 2018), I consider why political parties decide to take action. Political parties are made up of politicians who first and foremost are policy-makers embedded in a policy-making environment where they try to find solutions to the problems and crises which come up. Parties often view it as their task to represent the preference of their voters. Thus, it comes naturally for right-wing and populist parties which have always opposed immigration to contrast NGOs as soon as there is the chance to do so (Sevenans, 2018). Indeed, I can see that *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle* also attempted to increase the salience of the issue given that their parties already had a relatively strong position on migration-related issues. For instance, parties react more to media coverage about the issues they feel the strongest about.

Given that the relationship between the shift in media portrayal of NGOs and the migration policy proposals has been assessed, I will analyse why and how these proposals can be considered criminalisation proposals. The discursive analysis shows that the characterization of NGOs in the media is similar to the one the two parties' electoral programmes provide.

As far as the criminalisation of migration and migrants, the criminalisation of aspects of NGOs' work has been made possible through the criminalisation of migration and migrants themselves. Even though seeking asylum is lawful and seeking entry into a country with no authorisation is more appropriately considered an administrative infraction than a crime (even though in Italy illegal entry has been considered a criminal offence), the word *illegal* or *criminal* has often been used to label refugees and other migrants. When migrants' entry into a territory is deemed as *illegal*, which is how it has been presented by the media analysed in this thesis, the work of NGOs to provide humanitarian support may wrongly be construed as a form of aid or support or complicity in the illegality of the migrant situation. At the same time, the anti-smuggling narrative has been taking place as a narrative for criminalisation proposals.

While the media is considered as a necessary condition for migration policies proposals, the precise role and effect of the media depends on the motivations and intentions of the politicians and political parties. This is the reason behind the choice to consider only the *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle* apart from them winning the election.

Generally speaking, a profound change in the communication register therefore followed the *Gefira* think-tank allegations. Rescue activities started gradually being incorporated into a harsh and heated media and political discussion on immigration. This shift in portrayal also involved the cooperatives of the migrant reception system. This new approach threw a negative shadow on all civil society organizations operating either in the rescue or reception sectors to the point of accusing them of benefiting from the exploitation of illegal immigration; accusations which still stand to this day.

This narrative ends up legitimizing more restrictive migration policies and the strengthening of the militarization of borders. Frames played a crucial role in this process.

It is visible how the whole debate about NGOs activities shaped by a ‘discourse of criminalization’ may influence the sphere of policy-making into forms of crimmigration proposals and consequential forms of crimmigration legislation. From this perspective, certain groups of immigrants are scapegoated and framed as dangerous and illegal migrants. This tactic strips people of their own identities as individuals. It makes migrants perceive themselves only as members of a group; their individual self is alienated. Such framing occurs media reporting, in political discourse and in jurisprudence (van Berlo, 2015). As already explained, the manner in which an issue is framed makes a huge difference in how it is perceived. Framing, indeed, has come to be at the centre of the immigration debate. It has defined what is perceived as a ‘threat’ and a ‘problem’ and constrained the debate to a narrow set of issues. Descriptions of immigrants as criminals have almost become the standard and, as in this case, of NGOs committing something illegal. In this regard, considerable attention has been paid to the use of the term ‘illegal’, which is criticized not only because it “stresses criminality” and “defines immigrants as criminals” (Lakoff and Ferguson, 2006: 1), but also for being inaccurate. These linguistic expressions are anything but neutral. Even though a migrant’s action might be illegal, people themselves cannot be illegal. This also simplifies the complex issue of legal and illegal stay, which comprehends several ‘in-between’ situations described as ‘semi-compliance’ (Anderson, 2013; Düvell, 2011; Guild, 2004). According to Entman (1993), this description process builds up on the selection of only a few aspects of a perceived reality and the process of making them more salient which can be identified through the presence or absence of keywords and specific terms such as ‘illegal’, ‘criminal’, ‘threat’ and so on.

The focus was on *Lega* and *Movimento Cinque Stelle*’s proposals because they are the two parties who obtained the majority of the votes in the 2018 election and thus formed a government coalition. It was this particular coalition which later proposed and had the Parliament approve the decree-law *Decreto Sicurezza* by many considered as a form of crimmigration. This decree-law contained several measures concerning the control and limit of NGOs activities. For this reason, the focus was only on these two political parties to investigate whether the media had any role in influencing them to propose policies which would constrain NGO’s activities.

Given the above discussion, the findings of these research correspond with the theoretical expectations previously formulated. The hypothesis of this thesis was that media representation of NGOs affects crimmigration policy proposals in Italy. Through the discussion above, the hypothesis can be considered as confirmed while the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion and Limitations

This thesis attempted to answer the following research question: *What is the effect of the shift in media portrayal of NGOs by Italian media on political parties' migration policy proposals?*

The thesis collected data from media and political parties in order to answer this question. The data were analysed through the use of the agenda-setting theory and the concept of frame. This analysis has focused on a limited set of data in a limited timeframe. There is therefore the chance that some data, complying with the data selection criteria, might have not been included. Moreover, the data have been coded according to coding categories I selected. It might be possible that by using other codes, other results might arise apart from those already analysed.

Further research on the same topic might focus on analysing the effect of media on policy proposals in other countries as well as including the visual elements of media.

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Appendix 1

List of media quoted in the thesis

Author /Publisher	Title	Type of media	Language	Retrieved from URL	Publication date
Gefira	<i>Caught in the act: NGOs deal in migrant smuggling</i>	News blogpost	Already in English	https://gefira.org/en/2016/11/15/caught-in-the-act-ngos-deal-in-migrant-smuggling/	November 15 th , 2016
Gefira	<i>NGOs are smuggling immigrants into Europe on an industrial scale</i>	News blogpost	Already in English	https://gefira.org/en/2016/12/04/ngos-are-smuggling-immigrants-into-europe-on-an-industrial-scale/	December 4 th , 2016
Financial Times	<i>EU border force flags concerns over charities' interaction with migrant smugglers</i>	Newspaper article	Already in English	https://www.ft.com/content/3e6b6450-c1f7-11e6-9bca-2b93a6856354	December 15 th , 2016
La Repubblica	<i>Contacts with smugglers, NGO investigation</i>	Newspaper article	Translated from Italian into English (see first translation, Appendix n. 2)	https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/02/17/contatti-con-scafisti-indagine-sulle-ong15.html	February 17 th , 2017
Luca Donadel	<i>Truth about "MIGRANTS"</i>	YouTube video	Translated from Italian into English (see second translation, Appendix n. 2)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dP4rYgJKow	March 6 th , 2017
Striscia La Notizia	<i>Refugees Take-Away</i>	Television report on TV Channel Canale 5	Translated from Italian into English (see	https://www.striscianotizia.mediaaset.it/video/prof	March 10 th , 2017

			third translation, Appendix n. 2)	ughi-take-away_27887.shtm	
La Gabbia	<i>A twenty-year old discovers the strange routes of the ships that rescue migrants</i>	Television report on TV Channel La7	Translated from Italian into English (see fourth translation, Appendix n. 2)	https://www.la7.it/la-gabbia/video/unventenne-scopre-le-strane-rotte-delle-navi-che-soccorrono-i-migranti-16-03-2017-207453	March 15 th , 2017
Panorama	<i>Inquiry into NGOs above all suspicion</i>	Newspaper article	Translated from Italian into English (see fifth translation, Appendix n. 2)	https://www.panorama.it/news/in-dagine-sulle-ong-al-di-sopra-di-ogni-sospetto	April 3 rd , 2017

Appendix 2

English transcripts of the Italian media quoted in the thesis.

1. First translated transcript (newspaper article: La Repubblica, February 17th, 2017):

Contacts with smugglers, NGO investigation

The Italian entrepreneur Livio Lomonaco, the so-called "king of mattresses", has sold a thirty-meter luxury vessel, Astral, to a Spanish association. Moreover, the old fishing boat, Sea Watch, was bought and given to a group of volunteers in the Mediterranean. There are also two ships with drones owned by a couple of Italian American millionaires, Cristopher and Regina Catrambone. These are all private boats which have been supporting military ships in rescuing hundreds of thousands of migrants crossing the strait of Sicily for some years now. After the very heavy allegations of Frontex hypothesizing a "collusion with smugglers". The judiciary is now focusing on this topic.

"We want to understand who is behind all these humanitarian associations that have proliferated in recent years, where all the money they have access to comes from and, above all, what game they play" - says the Catania prosecutor Carmelo Zuccaro who confirms that he has opened a fact-finding investigation – "together with Frontex and the Italian Navy, we are trying to monitor all the NGOs which have shown lately that have great financial resources. It is obvious that we do not question the well-known humanitarian organizations".

The investigation is still at its initial phase, but it started due to the allegations made by Frontex in a report submitted to the European Union in which it is stated that migrants "would be given clear instructions before departure on the direction to follow to reach the boats of the NGO". In short, according to Frontex, humanitarian ships - which often go as far as to the Libyan coasts - would lend themselves to being taxis, bringing migrants to safety a few miles after their departure. In support of its suspicion, the European border agency provides data referring to October 2016 when humanitarian ships answered more than 40 percent of the S.O.S calls [by migrant boats] in comparison with 5 percent at the beginning of the year.

Data are confirmed after consulting the *Marinetraffic* website, the site tracking the presence of civilian boats in the Sicilian channel. The presence of humanitarian ships, even in the winter months, is always consistent. In 2016 alone they rescued more than 70,000 migrants, more than a third of

them, approximately 180,000, arrived throughout the year. A year with a record of 5,000 deaths during shipwrecks.

Following Frontex's allegations which led to the first judicial inquiry into their work, NGOs rescuing people at sea reply. «These are absurd allegations: we only save lives in agreement with the Coast Guard and we follow their indications - says Valeria Calandra of Sos Mediterranée. If they have any evidence, they can bring it out. We have never had contact with these people either by mistake or by luck. As for our funding, ninety percent are free donations from private individuals»

2. Second translated transcript (YouTube video by Luca Donadel, March 6th, 2017)

The truth about "MIGRANTS"

"A thousand migrants saved in the gulf of Sicily". Nowadays we are so used to such headlines that we don't even pay attention to them anymore. However, have you ever wanted to examine in depth the story, to get to the bottom of the story? Neglecting right-wing and left-wing slogans, what is the reality? What are the data, the tangible facts? In order to find out, I started analysing news like this (https://www.agi.it/regioni/sicilia/migranti_sos_dal_canale_di_sicilia_mille_in_salvo-1544717/news/2017-03-02/) in which there is a very interesting clue: the names of the boats of non-governmental organizations, NGOs, involved in the [rescue migrants] operation. Each of these boats has a tracking system on board, called AIS, which works in a similar way to an aircraft transponder. It allows to identify the boats, their position and their route. There are websites collecting these data and allowing subscribers to consult them in real time and via web. *MarineTraffic* is one of the best. By paying a hundred euro per month, it allows you to satellite tracking of all boats worldwide in real time and in any part of the globe.

Make yourself comfortable because I decided to use this very powerful and expensive service. Today, your boat ride is on me. Let's start, for example, with this news article from *Corriere della Sera* (https://corrieredelmezzogiorno.corriere.it/palermo/cronaca/17_feb_febbraio_23/migranti-altri-due-sbarchi-ci-sono-70-bambini-senza-genitori-373ce124_-f99f-11e6-978e-4d426519ea03.shtml), let's first pay attention to the date: February 23th, 2017. Some of the article's sentences are "All saved in the Strait of Sicily", "367 aboard the Peluso ship of the Coast Guard". Let's look at where the Coast Guard ship Peluso was on February 23th. It departs from Catania, it stops a few miles away from the Libyan coasts and then immediately returns to Pozzallo. From the geographic point of view, the strait

of Sicily is located between Tunisia and Sicily. As we can see from the date and the route, the ship Peluso has not remotely passed through the strait of Sicily. The ship has indeed stopped a few nautical miles from the Libyan coast and has then gone back immediately. The same goes for the NGO ship Acquarius. As we can see, the Acquarius ship simply passes through the strait of Sicily but the real operation takes place a few nautical miles off the coast of Libya, in the exact same spot as the Peluso ship, and then immediately returns to Sicily. Therefore, *Corriere* which writes that [the migrants] were saved in the strait of Sicily is just a colossal fake-news, a hoax. It is even worse because it intentionally reports information in a mendacious and untruthful way. If you think this episode might be a unique case, you are very wrong. Unfortunately, it is routine. Let's consider, for example, the Golfo Azzurro: one of the most active NGO ship. In the last sixty days, its route has never passed even once through the strait of Sicily, never: it is a continuous 'up and down' and the operations take always place in the same exact point, a few miles off the coast of Libya. Yet, a simple search is enough to discover that a lot of news falsely reports that the Golfo Azzurro rescued migrants in the strait of Sicily. According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a treaty also signed and ratified by Tunisia, people rescued in international waters must be brought to the nearest safe harbour which, in this case, is that of Zarzis, Tunisia. This harbour is ninety nautical miles away from the area where almost all the rescues take place. Malta is double: one hundred nautical miles, Sicily: two hundred and fifty. The question you should be asking yourselves now is: Why? Why go and pick [the migrants] up ten miles from the coast to bring them to Italy? Someone might answer: to save more lives but programs like *Mare Nostrum* and *Frontex Triaton* really save more lives?.

Look at this graph, keep in mind that the Mare Nostrum operation began in October 2013. Consider that this graph was done in mid-2015 so the 2015 bar is incomplete: let's complete it together. It's a rather simple operation to do, just search on any search engine "Mediterranean deaths 2016". These are the data from different sources I found. We can see that in 2014-2015, deaths have increased exponentially right after the implementation of these programs. The 2016 bar is so high that it doesn't fit [in the graph] so I have to raise the graph. From 2012 up to 2016, the death rate has increased tenfold. The reason why the deaths have increased exponentially is as simple as it is logical. Initially, the smugglers had to really cross the strait of Sicily to get to Lampedusa. In order to do so, they had to use boats equipped to support a journey of hundreds of miles. Now, the traffickers of human beings use the worst inflatable baths because they are sure that there will be someone to pick [the migrants] up a few ten miles away. These inflatables are likely to sink more often. Despite this, a higher number of people attempt to cross the sea. This mathematically means only one thing: more deaths. Frontex's Mare Nostrum and Triaton are directly responsible for the deaths of thousands and thousands of

people per year. This is not my opinion the numbers say so. These are facts. Among other things, who pays for this game? We often hear: it is Europe's money, the hospitality costs are covered by Europe. The European Union in 2016 paid us [Italians] just over one hundred million euros against a cost of over three billion for Italian taxpayers. You heard correctly: not millions, billions! Do you realize how much money is it? Three thousand million. By comparison, the European Union's one hundred million is a trifle.

We have then to start from the basics of communication: migrants [*migranti* in Italian] is the present participle of the verb *migrate*...birds migrate. Here we are talking about refugees (20%) those who actually obtain the refugee status because they flee from wars, political persecutions etc. and 80% of them are illegal immigrants. ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS!!! How many years have you not heard this word? Politically correctness has banned it. It is the European Union acknowledging these things, not me (<https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2016/12/08/news/la-commissione-ue-irregolari-l-80-dei-migranti-che-arrivano-in-italia-1.34752632>). While France, Switzerland, Austria, the countries bordering us, bar the borders, the Italian state is simply not able to expel these people because if the reception is expensive, you have no idea how more expensive the expulsion costs are. Four thousand euros per person. Multiply this number by the number of people to be expelled and you will understand that these costs are unsustainable.

So, let's go back to the main question: Why? Why do we keep going to get them? We have seen that we no longer save lives and that refugees [out of the people rescued at sea] are a very small percentage. Moreover, all of this has very high social costs. So why? And you see, the sad thing is that the answer is there for all to see. There is no conspiracy, no strong power: simply, there is a business, a business where we know the names and surnames of the people involved profiting and many of these are in *Profugopoli*, a book by Mario Giordano. It is said that Italians read little, less than one book a year. Trust me, this is the kind of book worth reading in order to have concrete arguments and not the usual slogans. If you want to buy it, do it using the link you find above in the description [of the video]. This book was published exactly a year ago. By reading the public available announcements of the cooperatives assigned the role of hosting migrants, it turns out that many cooperatives assigned are those same which have already been reported in the past. Nothing has changed for a year, now. I work in the communication field and I know that advertising is done when business is booming. Have you ever wondered why on television, newspapers, main-stream media there is a continuous hammering of films, documentaries, spectacularisation of the migrant phenomenon? Because, you see, as it is well explained in the book, the famous 35 euros [used to

sustain migrants awaiting the processing of their refugee status] do not go directly to refugees but to social cooperatives. In these cooperatives, riots by migrants break out because [the migrants] are often given the worst junk to eat and piled up in unsuitable spaces. This is done because the less you spend on them, the more margin goes into the pocket of the cooperative on duty. You have no idea how many people are directly or indirectly involved in all of this: cultural mediators, interpreters, social and health assistants, hotel owners, teachers who teach courses: lots of people, lots of public money ([https://www.today.it/cronaca / reception-migrants-basilicata.html](https://www.today.it/cronaca/reception-migrants-basilicata.html)). Consider this video as an appetizer. I am working on an in-depth study on the links between NGOs and the various cooperatives which I am sure you will appreciate. Among other things, I have some projects I am working on that I will tell you about soon. Summer is coming and I would like to organize a fundraiser to be able to continue monitoring traffic in the Mediterranean. So, to not miss my next videos and updates, like my Facebook page, subscribe to my YouTube channel and especially to my Telegram one. I wish a good read to those who decide to buy the book a good read and I hope to see you soon.

3. Third translated transcript (television report on TV Channel Canale 5: *Striscia La Notizia*, March 10th, 2017)

Refugees Take-away

Journalist: Italian friends, a video has been circulating on the web for a few days now. It has left me speechless. A young video-blogger was able to follow the satellite tracks left by the Italian ships that go rescue migrants at sea and discovered that they are all heading towards the same point: a few miles away from the coast of Libya and, in any case, far beyond the Italian territorial waters.

(*excerpt from Luca Donadel's video*): "Why pick them up ten miles from the coast to bring them back to Italy?"

Interview with Luca Donadel (D.L.):

Journalist (J): Luca, why? Have you found an answer?

L.D.: There is probably a business and there is someone who profits from this situation

J.: We have always had this doubt, too. How did you manage to trace the path of the rescue ships?

D.L.: I used *MarineTraffic* which is a website that allows you to track all the ships in the world and to obtain the routes in a satellite way by paying a subscription of four hundred dollars. It was enough

to criss-cross the names of the ships with the dates of the rescue to get the track of the route in that period.

J: Give me some examples?

D.L.: For example, the Golfo Azzurro, an NGO ship, which has moved up and down from Libya to Sicily as a taxi service in the last sixty days.

J.: Give me another example?

L.D.: For example, the Peluso ship of the Coast Guard which went a few miles away from the coast of Libya to carry out a rescue. Immediately after, it was reached by the NGO ship Acquarius, which in the exact same point, also carried out a rescue mission and to returned to Sicily.

J.: We tried it, too. Ships from all over the world that, in the last two months, have been commuting between Libya and Italy. I wonder how this young video-blogger was able to get there and not the official press. But Luca rightly points out another aspect in his video

(*excerpt* from Luca Donadel's video)

“According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a treaty also signed and ratified by Tunisia, people rescued in international waters must be brought to the nearest safe harbour which, in this case, is that of Zarzis, Tunisia. This harbour is ninety nautical miles away from the area where almost all the rescues take place. Malta is double: one hundred nautical miles, Sicily: two hundred and fifty”.

Resume of the interview

J: Is it possible that Italian ships will go to pick migrants up out of Italian territorial waters? To get an answer, Gimmilione [an Italian Journalist, who often works for *Canale 5*] has talked to some politicians.

- Gimmilione interviews Senator Maurizio Gasparri (member of *Forza Italia* which is a center-right party)

Not only the ships of the various international missions but also the ships of the various non-governmental humanitarian organizations enter the Libyan territorial waters. We denounced this in Parliament. Smugglers know of this convenience. These ships are warned and loaded with the illegal immigrants and then they bring them to Italy under the pretext of a humanitarian intervention which in reality is a flanking of the smugglers.

Gimmilione interviews the Honourable Francesco Boccia (member of *Partito Democratico* which is a center-left party)

In my opinion, whoever is at sea must be helped no matter what, especially if there is no one beyond our territorial waters to help them. Then we discuss why our ships are there, whether it is better to have them close to the shore so the boats [of smugglers] don't leave

Gimmilione interviews the Honourable Laura Ravetto (member *Forza Italia*)

Gimmilione: If a rescue takes place outside our territorial waters, the immigrant should be brought to the nearest harbour: either Tunisia or Malta.

Laura Ravetto: Those naval missions had the purpose of garrisoning the Libyan coast guards precisely to prevent people from going outside the Libyan borders and therefore prevent departures, except for the case of regulatory humanitarian corridors.

Gimmilione: Isn't there perhaps also an economic reason? Like, the more immigrants come, the more ...

Laura Ravetto: We have always denounced this, in the sense that it is quite clear, given a few ongoing investigations, that unfortunately it is convenient for many to maintain migrants at 35 euros a day.

Gimmilione interviews Matteo Colaninno (member of *Partito Democratico*)

Matteo Colaninno: I have always heard about our ships, our navies, our soldiers who are saving lives but I'm not there with the satellite looking at the border of the territorial waters.

Gimmilione: Our Italian ships seem to have gone beyond our borders, beyond our competences in some sense...

Matteo Colaninno: We will then talk to the Minister and if the rule is that migrants must be brought back to the nearest harbour, they must go to the nearest harbour otherwise it is a mistake.

(End of Gimmilione's interviews).

So, Luca, if your theory proves to be well-founded, it would deserve an official response from the institutions and if you want we can take over.

- 4. Forth translated transcript** (television report on TV Channel La7: *La Gabbia*, March 15th, 2017)

A twenty-year old discovers the strange routes of the ships that rescue migrants

Luca Donadel (D.L.): “A thousand migrants saved in the gulf of Sicily” Nowadays we are so used to such headlines that we don’t even pay attention to them anymore. However, have you ever wanted to examine in depth the story?

Journalist: This young video-blogger has followed the satellite tracks left by the Italian ships going to rescue migrants at sea. Let's listen to what he has to say.

(excerpt from the Luca Donadel's YouTube video) “Let’s consider, for example, the Golfo Azzurro: one of the most active NGO ship. In the last sixty days, its route has never passed even once through the strait of Sicily, never, it is a continuous ‘up and down’ and the operations take always place in the same exact point, a few miles off the coast of Libya. Why go and pick [the migrants] up ten miles from the Libyan coast to take them back to Italy? There is simply a business”

Journalist: Luca's video is a very strong allegation. His video is becoming popular online. NGOs ships are believed to go a few miles from Libya to pick more people up and fuel the “business of migration”. What really can be true in this video, we asked an international law expert to understand can be considered true in this video’s allegations.

Prof. Marco Lombardi [sociologist and director of ITSTIME (Italian Team for Security, Terroristic Issues & Managing Emergencies) of the Catholic University of Milan] (M.L.): Luca's video requires great attention to be paid. There is talk of operations in the strait of Sicily. Actually, they do not take place in the strait of Sicily, they go much further south.

Journalist: Why then do the ships go as far as here? (pointing to the Libyan territorial waters).

M.L.: They are not military ships: all private ships, from merchant ships to NGOs, can move freely, respecting the rules of the sea, but freely wherever they want.

Journalist: Are you implying that NGO ships are doing whatever they want?

M.L.: They are doing whatever they want as any private ship would do in the sea, they do not have to follow the same rules of behavior as military ships.

Journalist: You heard right: non-governmental organizations do whatever they want and where would the business be?

Another excerpt of Donadel's video:

D.L.: The famous 35 euros do not go directly to the refugees but to the social cooperatives" [...] Now, the traffickers of human beings use the worst inflatable baths because they are sure that there will be someone to pick [the migrants] up a few ten miles away. These inflatables are likely to sink more often. Despite this, a higher number of people attempt to cross the sea.

M.L.: All ships have an obligation to assist those in need at sea. There is a business behind the trafficking of people: a business that starts in the far south when they [migrants] cross the desert to reach the coast. Once [they have] crossed [the sea], other money, in abundance, circulates around the reception mechanism or that ...

Journalist: And why is the reception [taking place] only in Italy?

Another part of Luca Donadel's video is shown to Professor Marco Lombardi:

D.L.: People rescued in international waters must be brought to the nearest safe harbour which, in this case, is that of Zarzis, Tunisia. This harbour is ninety nautical miles away from the area where almost all the rescues take place.

M.L.: in the video we talk about a "safer and closer" harbor, how do we measure safety? It is a paradox: we are talking about a conflictual equilibrium which, perhaps, suits everyone and which, however, is measured by the lack of governance of this complex phenomenon and here I highlight the lack of Europe in managing this phenomenon.

5. Fifth translated transcript (Newspaper article: *Panorama*, April 3rd, 2017)

Inquiry into NGOs above all suspicion

The ships of humanitarian organizations are now rescuing migrants a few miles away from the Libyan coast. This is actually facilitating human traffickers and the flows of desperate people headed to Italy

Several prosecutors have focused their attention on the role of non-governmental organizations helping migrants off the Libyan coast and unloading them in Italy. It is not true that criminal investigations are stationary.

According to *Panorama*, there is a criminal investigation conducted by various judicial authorities in Sicily on NGOs' behaviours considered anomalous in many instances. Investigation files have been opened by the judicial police, which, in absolute secrecy, is also trying to identify if and who really finances these humanitarian missions. The prosecutors also want to shed light on the complicated system of Chinese boxes in which many of the ships involved in the rescue to have offices in off-shore countries. This investigative work aims at reconstructing the path to financing and to ascertain any illicit intertwining.

The Investigations

In these last few days, prosecutors are being selected to coordinate the various investigations. The discretion of the investigators reveals the trickiness of the matter. There have also been some indiscretions on the investigations concerning the NGOs responsible for managing the emergency. The hypotheses of crimes being committed prosecutors are working on range from supporting illegal immigration to criminal association. Meanwhile, some suspects are certain, as explained by the chief prosecutor of Catania, Carmelo Zuccaro, during his hearing at the Schengen Committee at San Macuto Palace in Rome.

The NGO ships go collect migrants right into the Libyan territorial waters. The calls for help via satellite telephone have drastically decreased from the boats to the command of the Port Authority. This suggests that the smugglers know the routes to follow to encounter with the humanitarian boats or that the NGO ships themselves are equipped with a sea control system capable of intercepting the vessels.

2016, with 181,436 arrivals, set the historical record for migrant arrivals on our [Italian] shores, with a peak of 27,384 landings in October. The landings were three times more than the same period in 2015. The Sicilian harbours were the main landing places: first, Augusta, then Pozzallo, Catania, Messina and Palermo. The migrants rescued by NGO ships were 46,796, which amount to 25 per cent of the total. According to Zuccaro, these rescue missions were mainly condensed in the months of

September and October when the non-government fleet got to 13 naval units. The Catania prosecutor states that this percentage has already risen to 50 percent in the first months of 2017.

Let's not consider for a moment Italy's capacity to welcome and remain on the saving of human lives. The question is simple: did the rescue near the Libyan coast lead to a decrease in the number of deaths during the crossings?

According to official UNHCR data, 2016 had the worst toll ever: over 5,000 deaths and missing people: an increase of 23 percent compared to 2015. In the first two months of 2017, we are already at 485 deaths among men, women and children compared to 425 last year.

Humanitarian effectiveness? Not always

No effectiveness therefore from a humanitarian point of view. But NGOs are not even capable of freeing migrants from the control of human traffickers. Indeed, the Sicilian prosecutors' investigations have registered what Zuccaro calls a "zeroing" [destruction] of the law enforcement actions against criminals' activities.

This is due also to the fact that the traffickers no longer have their own men drive the boats given that journey has become shorter [because they know that NGOs ships await in the Libyan territorial waters]. Indeed, the number of criminals arrested has dropped.

The reticent behaviour of migrants who disembark from NGO ships rather is telling, as well. They are less willing to answer questions and to cooperate in investigations than those rescued by military ships where an investigator facilitator is always on board. Meanwhile, the costs for the community are increasing.

In 2016, total immigration spending reached a record 4.2 billion euros. As for 2017, 3.8 billion has already been allocated (without taking into account the 200 million from the Fund for Africa) in which 860 million only for rescue operations at sea.

This humanitarian field sustains economically many small and large business centres that make ends meet through illegal immigration. The allegation by the Catania prosecutor is only once piece of evidence of a much larger picture.

On March 3rd, in a closed-door hearing in the English Parliament, the Austrian general Wolfgang Wosolsobe, chief of military staff of the European Union, rings the first alarm bell. The senior official declares that "migrants seem to receive instructions and guidelines on how to avoid giving information to the Italian police regarding the network of traffickers from at least one of the NGOs". He works under Federica Mogherini's office, the High Representative for European foreign policy. Faced by the dismay of the Lords of London, the general confirms: "we have proof". An Italian admiral, who has worked in the area, confirms to *Panorama*: "the survivors themselves tell us that the humanitarian personnel who rescued them at sea instruct them not to collaborate with the police and not to mention the names of the traffickers". The report together with Wosolsobe's revelations was published on the website of the British Parliament last year on May 13th as a clear proof that these circumstances were formally known to all the highest institutional officials, beginning with Mogherini herself.

The independent foundation Gefira, based in Nijmegen in the Netherlands, monitors humanitarian vessels on the Mediterranean through the *MarineTraffic* website. This site tracks the routes and positions of the ships. On October 12th, Gefira finds out that a Dutch journalist, Eveline Rethmeier, from the RTL nieuws broadcaster, is on board of the Golfo Azzurro. There, she starts a live reporting of the on-board activities on Twitter. Gefira criss-crosses the journalist's tweets with the whereabouts of the boats at sea. Rethmeier writes: "At 8 in the morning we receive the news that a boat is in trouble about 30 miles from us. The Italian Coast Guard requests assistance".

The reporter posts a video of a man she describes as the ship's manager who says verbatim in English: "There's a lot of chat on the radio this morning and it's the Coast Guard talking. It looks like something is happening: we don't have signal yet, we don't have the job, but we're moving towards that area, so get ready, get ready".

Golfo Azzurro is 30 miles away from the point where the rescue will take place, in Libyan territorial waters. At 7 p.m., according to the Ansa agency, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center in Rome contacts the ships Phoenix, Golfo Azzurro, Astra and Juventa for a rescue operation. At 8 p.m. the Megrez, a tugboat registered in Italy, leaves the Libyan harbour of Mellitah and goes up to 6 miles off the coast. At 20.40 p.m., the tugboat stops two miles from where the rescue takes place and turns around.

There is no other movement in the area. There is only this tugboat going out for a walk in the sea at night. At 9.20 pm, a drone from the Phoenix ship identifies a rubber boat 8.5 miles from Mellitah, in Libyan waters. 113 people are rescued. The nearest port is Zarzis, in Tunisia, but they are brought to Pozzallo.

Taco Dankers is in charge of Gefira, a sort of pan-European think-tank. We reach him by telephone in the Netherlands and he asks this question: "How is it possible that, listening to what the Dutch journalist says, she knew ten hours before what would happen in Libyan territorial waters?" This is last year in November. The European agency, Frontex, also notes some anomalies in the way migrants are transported: boats without water, food and blankets.

Inflatable boats

The fuel used is minimum. No more boats are used but only rubber dinghies. Departures kept taking place even in adverse sea conditions and at night-time. In an internal report published by the *Financial Times*, Frontex talks about migrants who received "clear indications on the direction to follow to reach the NGO boats" upon departure. The indictment is formalized in the 2017 annual report. In the report, Frontex writes of "involuntary help" to human traffickers. There are plenty of anomalies aboard the 13 naval units operating in the Mediterranean. Some non-profit organizations are part of projects financed by the foundation of the American billionaire George Soros. There are *Save the Children* and *Doctors Without Borders* operating with two units: **Bourbon Argos** and Dignity1. There are also five German NGOs: *Sos Méditerranée*, founded by former admiral Klaus Vogel and the ship *Acquarius*, whose mission costs amount to 11,000 euros per day. Sea watch foundation, with two naval units, one under the Dutch flag and the other under a New Zealand one as well as some air units. **Sea eye** with a fishing boat under the Dutch flag and a speedboat. Lifeboat with the ship *Minden*, German flag. Jugend Retter, with the *Juventa* fishing boat.

One NGO is Spanish, the *Proactive open arms* with two units: *Astral* and *Golfo Azzurro*. Finally, there is the Maltese organization *Moas*, with two ships *Phoenix* and *Topaz* responder, founded and financed by a couple of Italian American billionaires, Regina and Chris Catambrone, who manage the Tangiers group, specialized in "insurance, assistance in emergencies and intelligence services ". Ian Ruggier, a former Maltese officer, sits on the board of *Moas* even though he has severely repressed the protests of migrants who landed on the island in the past. It is rather striking that the majority of the NGOs have their operational base in Malta. They go pick migrants up right into Libyan territorial

waters and then move away from Malta itself and "unload" in Sicily. The problem is that they are allowed to do it. Indeed, the international standards signed by Italy allow it as Giuseppe Nesi, dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Trento, professor of international law, points out. Nesi is also a former legal advisor to the president of the general assembly of the United Nations.

Thirteen rescue areas

Nesi explains that "the Rescue and search (SAR) Convention, signed in 1979 by the International Maritime Organization, has divided the world into 13 rescue areas". "Whoever rescues must check which one is the nearest and safest harbour". Not only closeness, therefore, but also safety.

"The ship's captain and the coordinator of the area, which is always a state, are in charge of making the decision. In the case of the lower Mediterranean, the state in charge is Italy". Here's how he can wash his hands. While Italy has tied it up by itself, together with its feet ".