CALL FOR PAPERS

International Symposium

Beyond Humanitarian Narratives: Critical Perspectives on Media, Migration, and International Cooperation.

21 March 2013, Bologna, Italy

CesCoCom (Centro Studi avanzati sul Consumo e la Comunicazione), Department of “Sociologia e Diritto dell’Economia e dell’Impresa”, University of Bologna

In association with:
Cospe (Co-operation for the Development of Emerging Countries)

The aim of the symposium is to bring together researchers and practitioners from a variety of national contexts to discuss the relationship among Media, Migration, and International Cooperation across academic disciplines and professional fields.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
Professor Lilie Chouliaraki, Professor and Researcher Director of Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

OVERVIEW and CONFERENCE THEMES

In the second half of the twentieth century, international migration emerged as one of the main factors in social transformation and development in all regions of the world. Its significance looks set to increase further in the twenty first century, as population mobility grows in volume and takes on new forms. Migration is a result of the integration of local communities and national economies into global relationships. At the same time, it is a cause of further social transformations in both migrant-sending and receiving countries.

It is through the media that we learn most of what we know or believe we know about world affairs and politics, not through personal experience or contact. Immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees are often represented as victims or as a threat to the security of longer established populations: They are systematically portrayed as victims to be helped in their countries of origins or perpetrators of crime when they cross UE border. Very seldom they appear as actors of positive social change and development.

Humanitarian agencies, public movements, and community organizations are among the socio-cultural institutions that spearhead new political action and representation. Their visual and spatial iterations influence policies, practices and discourses of development and security. Media, imagery, and material culture underpin their systems of knowledge production and reception.

Our aim is to rethink and to reformulate the boundaries of these systems, by analyzing the emerging and historical narratives related to migration, development, international cooperation, and humanitarian aid.

Focusing on the ways the representations of the distant human suffering framed by media and humanitarian aid agencies are discursively dislocated from the context of humanitarian action and philanthropy into the context of border control, the symposium aims to shed light on the multifaceted interaction between social inequality and international cooperation in a globalizing world, as well as on the role of media to rise public awareness on migration and international cooperation issues.
The symposium aims to analyse the representation of migrants and their countries of origins in the European and Italians media, with special reference to ethic, aesthetic and political aspects of the “humanitarian narrative”. We intend with this term a complex of practices and cultural objects (literatures, films, marketing, media, art etc.) produced by international institutions and transnational organizations inspired by universal values (as, for instance, human rights or global citizenship), in order to bear on the balance of global inequality.

We invite submissions that address one or any combination of these three broad questions:

1) How do NGOs and media produce and disseminate images of migrants, and to what ends? How do the narratives of NGOs and migrants compare? How do they use media?

2) How do the narratives of each contribute to a global consciousness of humanitarian space and a collective social imaginary? How do images and public campaigns produce norms for how audiences should relate to suffering, the sufferer, and action related to the source of that suffering? How is the viewer's experience shaped and aestheticized?

3) How people who have set out to leave their localities for one reason or another without proper means of travel and documentation are represented in the two contexts of humanitarian aid and border control? What are the moral challenges?

This symposium welcomes papers that innovatively and critically approach questions dealing with communication and public awareness on: migration, international cooperation, humanitarian space, global inequality, visual citizenship, the problematic of mediating and witnessing distant suffering, the political vision of justice and social change.

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION
Please submit abstracts by email to pierluigi.musaro@unibo.it and paola.parmiggiani@unibo.it no later than December 30, 2012. Abstracts could be in Italian or in English and include a title, your contact details (name, affiliation, mailing address, email) and a description of your conference paper (250-400 words). The conference committee will begin reviewing abstract submissions immediately after the deadline. Notification of acceptance will be February 1, 2013. The conference committee will invite conference participants to submit their conference papers by March 1, 2013.

PUBLICATION PLANS
Conference co-organizers are planning to develop a special issue of an academic journal (Sociologia della Comunicazione) based on the themes of this international conference. The goal would be to publish the special issue in December 2013. To this end, the conference committee will invite conference participants to submit their unpublished full papers by April 30, 2013. Contributions should be of no more than 7,000 words in length.

CoMiDe PROJECT
The symposium is part of the “CoMiDe- Consistency of migration and development policy” a transnational initiative, funded by the European Commission, that aims to enhance, at European level, coherent policies on migration and development. Its objective is also to promote initiatives between development NGOs, migrant organisations, local and state actors in different countries.