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A collective refusal

An appeal by researchers involved in the production of knowledge on migration

Gruppo ricercatrici e ricercatori migrazioni

Day after day we keep receiving updates on that uncanny war which is ongoing in the Mediterranean: updates on how many migrants were rescued and how many have died since the beginning of "Mare Nostrum," the "military and humanitarian" operation that the Italian government enlisted in the Mediterranean as a response to the shipwreck of October 3, 2013. At that time, the island of Lampedusa was swamped by a wave of dead bodies - of women, men, and children. We are asked to form our opinion on Italian and European policies – those policies made also in our name - based on the statistics of deaths.

Nothing is said, however, about the political decisions that ground these policies. Nothing is said of the choice to prevent people from arriving in any other way than by makeshift boats. These are people who are fleeing the innumerable conflicts of our time, or people who are moving because of the economic crisis, or who would like to move simply to fulfill their desire to travel. Nothing is said, furthermore, about the choice to consider them as subjects 'to be saved' at sea - the choice, thus, to turn them all into 'castaways' in

need of military vessels that allow them the respite of a ‘humanitarian’ survival. Nor is anything said about the decision to keep enacting the borders of Europe at a distance - even in the current scenario of multiple wars, many of which, moreover, directly or indirectly European - through the tight filter of visas, which precludes travel with regular means of transportation and forces people, instead, to embark in journeys disseminated by a thousand obstacles. A mechanism which also underscores labor exploitation and the ghettoization of migrants through their ‘illegalization’. Nothing is said, yet again, of the decision to keep the Dublin regulations in force, which designates the first country of arrival within the EU as the one in charge of processing the claim to asylum, bouncing people back and forth between borders, or allowing them transit only intermittently in-between the meanders of under-the-table agreements between neighboring countries, as has been happening for months with Syrian and Eritrean refugees who start their journeys towards northern Europe from Milan train station.

Certainly, the fact that Italy and the European Union decide to manage their borders in this way seems legitimate from the standpoint of international law. Likewise, it is legal to deploy a military fleet equipped with the most advanced surveillance technologies – the same used in war – in order to save those who are at the same time forced to travel as castaways. For the European Union even operation 'Triton' is legitimate- that operation which, starting from the month of November, will substitute “Mare Nostrum” with the only objective of monitoring Mediterranean waters and not necessarily to save lives. And even an intervention such as “Mos Maiorum” is considered legitimate, which mandates that each European-Union member state should engage in a manhunt against “irregular” men, women and children

with the only purpose of expanding knowledge of the networks organizing these “illegal” trips. T trips which, incidentally, are made possible by the political decision to preserve the visa system for entry in the EU. It is, moreover, an intervention which shows how fast the move – performed in this case with absolute coherence and simply by a change in the orders issued – could happen from “military and humanitarian” operations to exclusively military and enforcement operations.

The political decisions of the European Union, furthermore, have re-articulated colonial logics through the externalization of borders, thus contributing to create a differential mobility selected on the basis of capital's and individual states' needs. Such political decisions in the last years have been redesigned in terms of an “externalized hosting” or of "humanitarianism at distance” for people escaping the numerous war scenarios. As researchers involved in different fields of knowledge production on migration, we refuse to be complicit with those policies, whose effects we see every day: no space to exist is granted for millions of people, except a submerged space, that can be the space of the sea, the space of the tunnels connecting different European states, the space of the gates of Ceuta and Melilla, or the space of the Libyan warehouses where people are forced to stay before crossing the sea. To express our collective refusal, we intend to share this text by reading it during university meetings and at conferences on migration. We don’t want this text to be a simple statement; we ask students and colleagues to sign it and contribute to its circulation: in classes, in study places, during lectures, at meetings, at conferences and assemblies. Moreover, we ask that the text be circulated at universities in other European states and even brought out of the academy in all the places and contexts where a discourse on migration is produced today. This is a collective refusal on the part

of those who work in the university, one of the most significant sites of this knowledge production and of complicity with the mechanisms of confinement and with the politics of the government of mobility.

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First signatories:
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Petition: https://www.change.org/p/to-all-those-who-want-to-sign-a-collective-refusal-an-appeal-by-researchers-involved-in-the-production-of-knowledge-on-migration?just_created=true&lang=en-US