

Biopolitical Border Imagery during the European Migrant Crisis: A Comparative Discourse Analysis between Mediterranean Europe and the Balkans

Authors : Mira Kaneva

Abstract : The ongoing migration crisis polemic opens up the debate to the ambivalent essence of borders due to both the legality and legitimacy of the displacement of vast masses of people across the European continent. In neoliberal terms, migration is seen as an economic opportunity, or, on the opposite, as a social disparity; in realist terms, it is regarded as a security threat that calls for mobilization; from a critical standpoint, it is a matter of discourse on democratic governance. This paper sets the objective of analyzing borders through the Foucauldian prism of biopolitics. It aims at defining the specifics of the management of the human body by producing both the irregular migrant as a subject (but prevalently as an object in the discourse) and the political subjectivity by exercising state power in repressive practices, including hate speech. The study relies on the conceptual framework of Bigo, Agamben, Huysmans, among others, and applies the methodology of qualitative comparative analysis between the cases of borders (fences, enclaves, camps and other forms of abnormal spatiality) in Italy, Spain, Greece, the Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Bulgaria. The paper thus tries to throw light on these cross- and intra-regional contexts that share certain similarities and differences. It tries to argue that the governmentality of the masses of refugees and economic immigrants through the speech acts of their exclusion leads to a temporary populist backlash; a tentative finding is that the status-quo in terms of social and economic measures remains relatively balanced, whereas, values such as freedom, openness, and tolerance are consecutively marginalized.

Keywords : Balkans, biopolitical borders, cross- and intra-regional discourse analysis, irregular migration, Mediterranean Europe, securitization vs. humanitarianism

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