



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
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Helping others to help oneself
An analysis of *Humanitarian Corridors'* project

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June 2020

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Number of Characters: 134.877

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6
METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	11
CONTEXT	19
THE ‘EUROPEAN REFUGEE CRISIS’	19
THE PROJECT OF <i>HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS</i>	24
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	34
LITERATURE REVIEW	34
THE WORKS OF MICHAEL BARNETT AND DIDIER FASSIN	37
ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION	44
<i>HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS</i> AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE REDEMPTION	45
<i>HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS</i> ’ OUTSOURCING ROLE	56
FINAL REFLECTIONS AND LIMITATIONS	59
CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY	63

Abstract

The present thesis analyses the case of *Humanitarian Corridors*, a humanitarian project born in 2015 in Italy as an answer to the thousands of drownings happening just off of Italian shores. It is the result of a collaboration between various faith-based organisations and the Italian government. This project is often held in high regard and is considered to be good practice. Moreover, it follows a different trend than the mainly negative mindset of securitisation and externalisation practices that many European countries hold. There is a gap in existing literature on studies that critically assess the project of *Humanitarian Corridors*; refusing to take the project's authors' motivations behind the creation of the project at face value, this thesis examines the grounds for the project's conception and its consequences on how the project functions operationally. Thus, the aim is to answer the following research questions: *why was the project of Humanitarian Corridors conceived?* and secondly *did the reasons for its conception lead to any consequences on how the project is implemented and run? If so, which ones?*

The research consists of a single-case study relying on qualitative data collected through document analysis and one semi-structured, informative interview. The collected material has been analysed through the works of Didier Fassin and Michael Barnett that critically assesses and scrutinises the concept of humanitarianism. Their works shed light on *Humanitarian Corridors*' controversial dynamics and offered the instruments to criticise them while also acknowledging their positive impact. Therefore, this thesis' strength lies in the fact that it looks critically at the project, refusing to adhere either to an overly romanticised or to an overly sceptical vision of its humanitarian nature. The analysis showed that *Humanitarian Corridors* were conceived not only to offer asylum seekers safe and legal access to Italy, but also for the founding faith-based organisations to prove their own goodwill. This secondary 'goal' affected the choice of the prioritised selection criteria: the beneficiaries' vulnerability

and their potential for integration. These criteria arguably turned out to be means of exclusion. Moreover, due to necessitating the authority of the Italian government in issuing the visas for the beneficiaries to legally access Italy, the formation of a partnership between the government and the organisations turned *Humanitarian Corridors* into an externalisation tool to admit only a few, carefully selected beneficiaries in the name of a need for security.

List of abbreviations

CAS	Emergency Reception Centres
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SIPROIMI	Protection System for Holders of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (Sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati)
SPRAR	System for Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

The area of interest of the present thesis concerns *Humanitarian Corridors*, a pilot project born in 2015 in Italy with the aim to provide safe and legal entry to Europe for individuals in need of international protection.

The present thesis stems from an interest in exploring possible alternatives to what has often been appointed as “the worst annual death toll ever seen”¹. The number of forcibly displaced individuals has been rising over the years; asylum seekers seek refuge in neighbouring countries that do not have many opportunities to offer them.² This pushes them to travel further towards European Countries.³ The journeys they face on their way to Europe are often reliant on human smugglers who offer them dangerous journeys in precarious boats.⁴ In 2015 more than 3000 people lost their lives in their attempt to reach refuge in Europe via the Central Mediterranean route.⁵ The European media referred to these events as a “global refugee crisis”.⁶ As pointed out by Monish Bhatia along with Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, referring to the situation as a ‘crisis’ conceals the European Union’s struggle to develop a coherent plan reliant on international cooperation.⁷ Indeed, the European Common Asylum System is built upon the Dublin Regulations which mainly leaves the responsibility of receiving asylum seekers to Southern European Member States like Greece and Italy.⁸ These countries were rapidly overwhelmed by the amount of migrants they had to take care of and such a situation created tensions between them and the European Union.⁹ These tensions between European countries translated into domestic conflicts between the host society and asylum

¹ Cumming-Bruce, «‘Worst Annual Death Toll Ever’»; EUobserver, «Migrant Death Toll at Sea Reaches 900»; «Migrant, Refugee Death Toll in Mediterranean Tops 1,000 for 6th Year».

² Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge*, 2.

³ UNHCR, «Figures at a Glance»; Betts e Collier, *Refuge*, 2.

⁴ Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge*, 2.

⁵ Betts and Collier, 2.

⁶ Betts and Collier, 2.

⁷ Betts and Collier, *Refuge*, 2; Monish Bhatia, “Seeking Refuge in Europe”, 73.

⁸ Betts and Collier, *Refuge*, 64.

⁹ Betts and Collier, 71; Pietro Castelli Gattinara, “The ‘Refugee Crisis’ in Italy as a Crisis of Legitimacy,” 2.

seekers.¹⁰ In turn, the measures adopted by European Member States focused on limiting the influx of asylum seekers, seen as a security threat¹¹, on European soil.¹² Currently, the possibility to apply for asylum is generally considered as dependent on the physical presence of the applicant in the national territory of that Member State.¹³ In this regard, Cecilia Malmström, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, pointed out in her 2011 speech at the European Conference “Exploring Avenues for Protected Entry in Europe” held in Brussels that:

‘people in need of protection have an absolute right to apply for asylum once they are on EU territory – it is just that in order to get onto EU territory, many of them will have to turn to human smugglers, enter the territory illegally or, even if they are not smuggled in, carriers may be fined for letting them onboard. It is not logic that, in order to seek protection from harm, somebody would feel that they need to break the law. The stigmatisation that this creates is unfair. At the same time EU Member States have to control their external borders and the people who enter the territory. Facilitating a route of entry for those seeking protection is therefore an important but difficult task.’¹⁴

The idea of opening *Humanitarian Corridors* arose from the will to move in this direction; they are presented as a project aiming at facilitating access to Europe for asylum seekers by providing them with safe and legal entry. They are the result of a collaboration between state and non-state, religious actors who negotiated the signature of a memorandum of understanding between the Italian Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Community of Sant’Egidio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches and the Waldensian

¹⁰ Betts and Collier, *Refuge*, 71; Castelli Gattinara, “The ‘Refugee Crisis’ in Italy as a Crisis of Legitimacy,” 2.

¹¹ Cecilia Menjivar, «Immigration Law Beyond Borders», 355–56; Ariane C. d’Appollonia, «Frontiers of Fear».

¹² Menjivar, “Immigration Law Beyond Borders”; Alexander Betts, *Forced Migration and Global Politics*, 71–72.

¹³ Christopher Hein and Maria de Donato, «Exploring avenues for protected entry in Europe».

¹⁴ Hein and Donato, 37.

Evangelical Church.¹⁵ The project is presented as ‘a safe way for everyone’¹⁶: for migrants who can safely reach Europe by flight and for the Italian authorities who can run all the necessary security checks before issuing a visa.

The project is often referred to as an example of good practice both by the faith-based organisations and by many scholars; it was also supported by the European Commission’s interest in the topic.¹⁷ Cesare Zucconi, secretary general of the Community of Sant’Egidio, defines *Humanitarian Corridors* as a project that features a ‘positive narrative’ of migration that stands out in a European and Italian context in which the dominant narratives are mainly negative; he underlines the need to spread the message that such projects perform well and can have a positive impact on the society;¹⁸ literature on the topic also emphasizes its potential, describing the project as deserving further attention as it is a cost-effective, feasible model that provides a better reception and integration system than the current one.¹⁹

The present thesis treats the project differently; it tries to question its mainstream portrayal and investigate its nature more deeply. Following a Foucauldian approach that aims at problematising what may appear self-evident²⁰, it refuses to take for granted the aforementioned, idealised version of *Humanitarian Corridors*. Given the humanitarian nature of the project, the instruments for such an endeavour were provided by a theoretical framework critically engaging humanitarianism obtained by combining the works of Didier Fassin²¹ and

¹⁵ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, “Humanitarian Corridors Are Open - From Italy a Signal of Hope for Europe”

¹⁶ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, “Humanitarian Corridors for Refugee”; Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione internazionale, “Humanitarian Corridors”.

¹⁷ Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Directorate Migration and Protection, and MPI Europe, “Study on the Feasibility and Added Value of Sponsorship Schemes as a Possible Pathway to Safe Channels for Admission to the EU, Including Resettlement”

¹⁸ Cesare Zucconi, Interview with Cesare Zucconi, Secretary General Community of Sant’Egidio, 28’30” - 29’26”.

¹⁹ Susanna Trotta, “Safe and Legal Passages to Europe: A Case Study of Faith-Based Humanitarian Corridors to Italy”; Mirko Sossai, “Canali Di Ingresso Legale e Sicuro Dei Migranti in Europa: Il Modello Dei Corridoi Umanitari”; Pedro Gois and Giulia Falchi, “The Third Way. Humanitarian Corridors in Peacetime as a (Local) Civil Society Response to a EU’s Common Failure”.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, 8–9.

²¹ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*.

Michael Barnett²². These authors treat humanitarianism as a morally complicated concept and invite critical sensibility to uncover its intrinsic contradictions.²³ Moreover, they highlight that humanitarian actions often generate controversial effects, especially in the relationship between the actors involved. Their considerations regarding humanitarianism's twofold objective of improving the precarious lives of others while also allowing humanitarians to do something for themselves raised the question whether such a dynamic was present in *Humanitarian Corridors* as well.²⁴

Hence, a deeper analysis of the reasons behind the project's conception that does not settle for the objectives stated by its actors. Furthermore, it investigates whether these reasons influenced the way in which the project is implemented and run. In answering these questions, emphasis is given to disclose the complex relationship between the sponsoring organisations, the Italian authorities and the asylum seekers. Thus, this thesis will attempt to answer the following Research Questions:

Why was the project of Humanitarian Corridors conceived?

and secondly,

Did the reasons for its conception lead to any consequences on how the project is implemented and run? If so, which ones?

To conclude, keeping in mind Barnett's and Fassin's theory when looking at *Humanitarian Corridors* allows one to become aware of and able to challenge practices and actions that are otherwise unquestioned.

This thesis contributes to an existing body of literature focusing on the project of *Humanitarian Corridors* and on humanitarianism. The importance of the present study within

²² Barnett, *Empire of humanity*.

²³ Barnett, 9–15.

²⁴ Barnett, 26; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 252.

the existing literature lies in its focus on challenging the practices of humanitarianism that are embedded in the project and on the side-effects that they generate. The ‘positive narrative’ to which Zucconi refers²⁵ might be jeopardised by negative impacts embedded in it. The strength of this research relies on its effort to provide a constructive critique of the project and go beyond the mere acknowledgment of its positive impact.

The thesis begins with methodological considerations about the research process as well as considerations on the positionality of the researchers writing this thesis. Then, the second chapter will be dedicated to the introduction of the European and Italian context the project was born in. Here, the project of *Humanitarian Corridors* will also be introduced and its key features will be presented. A third chapter focusing on the theoretical framework will provide a brief literature review about humanitarianism and introduce the works by Michael Barnett and Didier Fassin which constitute the theoretical foundation of the present research. The fourth chapter will analyse the object of study through the lenses of the previously introduced theoretical considerations and will discuss the findings in order to answer the research questions. The thesis ends with concluding remarks about the analysis and recommendation for further research.

²⁵ Interview with Cesare Zucconi, Secretary General Community of Sant’Egidio, 28’30”-29’26”.

Methodological Considerations

This chapter aims at providing an overview of the methodology employed throughout the thesis. This includes a brief account of the method employed to analyse the data, mainly consisting of documents, complemented by an informative interview. Moreover, the challenges and benefits of the chosen method will be addressed, followed by considerations regarding the lack of interviews and fieldwork. Furthermore, a quick account of the research process developments that led to the present problem formulation will be provided. In addition, a reflection on the authors' positionality in relation to the research topic will help identify any preconceived notions or beliefs. Lastly, the reasons behind the choice of the theoretical framework as well as its relevance for the present case study will be discussed.

The thesis consists of the analysis of a case study relying on qualitative data. It is a case of private sponsorship addressed to potential beneficiaries of international protection moved by humanitarian reasons. Alan Bryman defines a case study as a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case due to the particular nature of the case in question.²⁶ The research can regard an organisation, a person, a community, specific events and many other subjects whose limits are quite defined;²⁷ the present thesis consists of a single-case study of a project that can be considered quite unique.²⁸ Following Robert K. Yin's criteria,²⁸ one could call it an 'unusual case'; a case study can be defined as 'extreme' or 'unusual' when it concerns something out of the ordinary thus making it worthy of study.²⁹ Its uniqueness is due to its focus on offering asylum seekers safe and legal entry to Europe in a historical moment characterised by an opposing trend of securitisation and outsourcing practices which will be explained in the next chapter. The focus on a single-case study rather than on several examples of the same

²⁶ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 66.

²⁷ Robert K. Yin, *Case study research*, 128; Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 67.

²⁸ Yin, *Case study research*, 179–80.

²⁹ Yin, 180; Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 70.

phenomenon often allows one to gain an in-depth understanding of it.³⁰ This is even more valuable when dealing with a case in a different way³¹; in the present thesis, that translates into going beyond the mainstream portrayal of the project as a positive alternative to the European way of managing migration and challenging its core principles through the analysis of the reasons leading to the project's conception. The founding organisations in fact present *Humanitarian Corridors* as a project born to respond to the number of refugees fleeing war and poverty and seeking shelter in Europe.³² The next chapter, dedicated to the presentation of the context, will provide detailed information about the reasons for its implementation conveyed by the sponsoring organisations. However, following Michel Foucault, '[t]here are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all'.³³ Hence, the following analysis will try to adopt this approach and, through the eyes of the chosen theories, will attempt at looking beyond what may appear self-evident. It will consist of what Foucault would call 'an endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of what is already known', meaning an effort to problematise the given reality.³⁴

With regards to the relationship between theory and research, the present thesis employed a mainly deductive approach to engage in a theoretical analysis of the case under study;³⁵ therefore, on the basis of theoretical considerations of the case, it has been assumed that the reasons given in the official documents of the organisations did not provide a complete picture of the purposes for the implementation of the project. After starting from this

³⁰ John Gerring, *Case Study Research*, 1.

³¹ Gerring, *Case study research*, 40.

³² Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale», 7.

³³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2*, 8.

³⁴ Foucault, 9.

³⁵ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 2012, 24.

hypothesis, the chosen theoretical framework guided the process of gathering data and the enquiry into the case;³⁶ the theory was indeed used ‘as a background to qualitative investigations’.³⁷ However, as noted by Bryman, although inductive and deductive approaches are usually presented as mutually exclusive, they often contain elements of the other.³⁸ Therefore, to be more accurate, the strategy used for the research process could be defined as ‘iterative’, as it required a flexible relationship between data and theory.³⁹ Indeed a nuance of inductive reasoning is identifiable in that the research was inspired by the observation of a specific case and moved towards the quest for a theory that could help in interpreting the case. But later on, the theory led to the formulation of the research question and guided the case’s analysis, allowing it to reach an in-depth understanding of the case and to answer the research question.

On the other hand, one must acknowledge that the choice of dealing with a case study precludes the ability to generalise its discoveries.⁴⁰ This and the fact that the findings of this thesis will be circumscribed by the case study have been taken into consideration. However, the goal is not to generalise findings but rather to generate a well-documented and coherent study of the object of research.⁴¹

As noted by Glenn A. Bowen, document analysis is particularly useful in case studies of both a single phenomenon or a programme.⁴² Therefore, when collecting data it has been employed as ‘a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents’⁴³ that enables one to understand data and produce empirical knowledge by following a precise method.⁴⁴ Documents can consist of manuals, institutional reports, background papers, books and

³⁶ Bryman, 24–27.

³⁷ Bryman, 27.

³⁸ Bryman, 25–26.

³⁹ Bryman, 26.

⁴⁰ John Gerring, *Case study research*, 43.

⁴¹ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 71.

⁴² Glenn A. Bowen, «Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method», 29.

⁴³ Bowen, 34.

⁴⁴ Bowen, 35.

brochures as well as newspaper articles, press releases, images, and many other written or visual documents as long as they have been recorded without the researcher's intervention.⁴⁵ In the present thesis, the analysed documents mainly consisted of research material produced by the project's sponsoring organisations. In this regard, a Handbook⁴⁶ supplied by one of the sponsoring organisations, available online, resulted particularly helpful in gaining detailed knowledge about the project's implementation procedures. As noted by Sharan B. Merriam, the importance of investigating documents relies on their capacity to 'uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem'⁴⁷. This involves a process of data selection that requires the researcher to critically select relevant information in the documents analysed and to consider their meaning within the context they were produced.⁴⁸ To be fair, the method requires an initial phase of superficial examination of documents followed by a thorough reading of those considered the most meaningful and relevant; only then can a final interpretation of the most pertinent information found in the selected documents be possible.⁴⁹ Through the latter, one becomes able to produce empirical knowledge and develop an in-depth understanding of the research problem.⁵⁰

We acknowledge that over-relying on documents could potentially lead us to face limitations such as the lack of sufficient details or the danger of selecting biased documents.⁵¹ Indeed, as pointed out by Glenn Bowen, the documents used for studies concerning an organisation will often sustain its agenda and principles.⁵² The risks associated with the choice of this method have been taken into account and we attempted to minimise them by employing

⁴⁵ Bowen, 27–28.

⁴⁶ Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale».

⁴⁷ Sharan B. Merriam, *Case study research in education*, 118.

⁴⁸ Glenn A. Bowen, «Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method», 31, 38.

⁴⁹ Bowen, 32.

⁵⁰ Bowen, 33–34.

⁵¹ Bowen, 31–32.

⁵² Bowen, 32.

objectivity and sensitivity towards the documents and data analysed.⁵³ Regardless, it was considered the most appropriate method for the present thesis partly due to the delicate period we are currently experiencing⁵⁴ and partly because we believe that the collected material provides us with enough data to analyse, despite its subsequently discussed limitations.

However, an informal, qualitative, semi-structured interview⁵⁵ was held with a representative of one of the faith-based organisations involved in the project to gain insight from the people who founded and manage it. An ‘interview guide’ has been produced and followed, leaving room for the interviewee to express their thoughts on the topic.⁵⁶ The interview does not constitute a major part of the analysis, yet it served to grasp the organisations’ stance with respect to the topics addressed by their work.⁵⁷ It was mainly used during the preliminary stage of research in order to understand how they make sense of the world and as inspiration for which issues to investigate further through document analysis. Interviewing several of the actors involved in the project would have provided us with data that could have highlighted different aspects of it. For instance it would have helped to investigate the actors’ level of reflexivity and ethical considerations concerning their work and its consequences.

Looking at the merits of the case, an initial review⁵⁸ of the documentation and literature on *Humanitarian Corridors* served to contextualise the object of analysis within the sociological and political context which led to the conception and implementation of the project. As shown in the following chapter, this also shed light on the strengths of *Humanitarian Corridors* through the narratives of those who established it. Refusing to take

⁵³ Bowen, 32.

⁵⁴ World Health Organization, “Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).”

⁵⁵ Cesare Zucconi, Interview with Cesare Zucconi, Secretary General Community of Sant’Egidio. Please note that the present interview was held in Italian; the interviewee’s quotes used throughout the thesis consist of the authors’ translations.

⁵⁶ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 471.

⁵⁷ Bryman, 471.

⁵⁸ Glenn A. Bowen, «Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method», 32.

for granted the explanations regarding the conception of the project, a second and more thorough document review took place and supplied material for the analysis;⁵⁹ it served to reflect on the reasons for the establishment of the project through a more theoretical lense and helped in answering the research questions.

During the first stage of research, the humanitarian nature of the project became clear. The faith-based organisations that started the project appeared to be moved by humanitarian principles which led to base the analysis on a theoretical framework critically engaging with the concept of humanitarianism. Therefore, a brief literature review of existing literature on humanitarianism has been generated to provide an overview of the theoretical debate on humanitarianism. It proved useful for gaining a thorough understanding of the topic and supporting the choice of the theories. Indeed, as Alan Bryman notes, literature review is often used to highlight gaps in previous studies on the topic.⁶⁰ This consideration also applied to the present research, in which its usage served to show the shortage of studies not based on the binary notions of humanitarianism as “good” or “bad” and rather treating the concept as a complex one.

Moreover, the importance given by Fassin’s and Barnett’s works to the religious undertones behind the employment of humanitarian interventions made their theories particularly relevant in analysing the present case as they fit with the sponsoring organisations’ religious nature. These organisations developed the project and produced most of the analysed documents, which makes their religious and humanitarian affiliation important to discuss through theoretical lenses.

The governmental actors will not constitute the main focus in the analysis, as they appear little involved in the conception of *Humanitarian Corridors*. Nevertheless, due to their

⁵⁹ Bowen, 33–34.

⁶⁰ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 463.

bureaucratically tangible role, they will not be totally neglected as their participation in the project entails significant consequences on the project's agenda and implementation. Furthermore, the chosen framework reflects our level of critique of the project: looking at it critically yet recognising its positive impact.

As Kirsti Malterud notes it is important to always engage in a process of reflexivity throughout the research.⁶¹ As she points out reflexivity is about 'identifying preconceptions brought into the project by the researcher, representing previous personal and professional experiences, pre-study beliefs about how things are and what is to be investigated, motivation and qualifications for exploration of the field, and perspectives and theoretical foundations related to education and interests'.⁶² In line with her definition we acknowledge that our position as Italian students of a Masters specialised in Global Refugee studies played a role in the research process. In particular, our Italian origins certainly make us sensitive to the topic because of Italy's direct involvement in the so-called 'refugee crisis' due to its geographical proximity to the Mediterranean sea. Italy plays a crucial role, together with Greece and Spain, as it is one of the countries of first arrival for most asylum seekers heading towards Europe.⁶³ As it will be discussed later, the large number of arrivals put Italy under pressure, leading to a response mainly focused on preventing the influx. We saw the implementation of *Humanitarian Corridors* as an effort made by our fellow citizens to provide a different response in front of this situation. However, as soon as we gained an in-depth understanding of the project we also acquired knowledge about its shortcomings. We found ourselves questioning whether it was morally correct to criticise a project of which we truly admire the intent, and we almost risked backing down. As Didier Fassin highlights '[...] humanitarian reason is morally untouchable. But once we attempt to go beyond this intellectual taboo, the question becomes:

⁶¹ Kirsti Malterud, «Qualitative Research», 484.

⁶² Malterud, 484.

⁶³ European Council on Foreign Relations, "Migration through the Mediterranean."

What is the correct distance from which to study it? Or perhaps, more precisely, what is the correct position for critique?’⁶⁴ As mentioned above in this regard, it was the same Fassin who offered us the instruments for such critique to stand without obscuring the positive impact of the project. Its theory, together with Michael Barnett’s theoretical framework, allowed us to approach the study of the project and of its dynamics more conscientiously.

Looking at the merits of the case, the next chapter will introduce the European and Italian context in which the project of *Humanitarian Corridors* took shape and will provide an overview of the project key features and its actors.

⁶⁴ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 244.

Context

The following chapter aims at introducing the project of *Humanitarian Corridors* and at providing an overview on its implementation. Firstly, a brief introduction to the European and Italian context in which the project was born will be provided to understand the political and historical circumstances leading to the implementation. Secondly, *Humanitarian Corridors* will be contextualised within homonymous practices of humanitarian aid such as the corridors established in the Balkans and in Syria; similar private and public sponsorship programmes such as the Canadian example and resettlement will also be presented. Thirdly, the actors involved in the conception and implementation of the project will be introduced, together with a reflection on the nature of their relationship. Moreover, the project's key features will be outlined and the reasons presented by the sponsoring organisations as the ones leading to the implementation of the project will be presented. Additionally, the project's contribution in the Italian reception system and its achievements up until now will be discussed. Lastly, the project of *Humanitarian Corridors* will be shortly put in relation to the previously outlined European migration arena and its contribution to it will be pointed out.

The 'European refugee crisis'

We live in a historical moment in which 70.8 million people have been forcibly displaced from their country of origin due to mass violence and moved to seek refuge abroad.⁶⁵ About 80% of them are being hosted in neighbouring countries, whereas the remaining moved towards the so-called Global-North in search for safety.⁶⁶ Since April 2015, Europe has experienced a large influx of mostly displaced Syrians who refused to seek refuge in neighbouring countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey due to the limited opportunities those

⁶⁵ UNHCR, «Figures at a Glance»; Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge*, 1.

⁶⁶ UNHCR; Betts and Collier, 2.

countries offered them.⁶⁷ As a consequence, during 2015, over a million Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan and sub-Saharan African asylum seekers entered the European continent.⁶⁸ Most of them paid human smugglers to be transferred into precarious boats from Libya to the Italian island of Lampedusa via the well-known Central Mediterranean route; others preferred to cross the Aegean Sea from Turkey, reach Greece and then walk to Germany, thus passing through the Western Balkans.⁶⁹ Such journeys did not come without risks. Many people who faced them never made it to the other side and drowned at sea.⁷⁰ The media started referring to the situation as a ‘global refugee crisis’ due to its magnitude.⁷¹ However, as Betts and Collier point out: ‘in reality this was a European crisis. And it was a crisis of politics rather than a crisis of numbers’.⁷² The language of crisis concealed the European politicians’ struggle to comprehend the problem and formulate a coherent solution to it.⁷³ Meanwhile, European Member States focused on developing domestic policies to deal with these migratory flows rather than on finding a shared European plan.⁷⁴ Illustrative examples of such behaviour are the polarising responses adopted by Hungary and Germany: the former built a razor wire fence to keep migrants out whereas the latter announced that its borders were open for Syrian refugees to enter.⁷⁵

A step towards a shared European response to the crisis was made with the creation of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), establishing common qualification criteria for granting refugee status and common reception standards for European Member States.⁷⁶ It was

⁶⁷ Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge*, 2.

⁶⁸ Betts and Collier, 2.

⁶⁹ Betts and Collier, 2.

⁷⁰ EUobserver, «Migrant Death Toll at Sea Reaches 900».

⁷¹ Pedro Gois and Giulia Falchi, «The third way. Humanitarian corridors in peacetime as a (local) civil society response to a EU’s common failure», 62. Alexander Betts and Collier, *Refuge*, 2.

⁷² Betts and Collier, *Refuge*, 2.

⁷³ Betts and Collier, 2.

⁷⁴ Betts and Collier, 2.

⁷⁵ Betts and Collier, 2–3.

⁷⁶ Betts and Collier, 63.

born to create a shared European asylum and immigration policy and to support the establishment of the Schengen Area.⁷⁷ In fact, the implementation of the Area Schengen had the shortcoming of making the entry to the whole area dependent on the policies and implementation capacities of the Member States with an external border, such as Italy and Greece.⁷⁸ Worried that these states' border policies were not strong enough to protect access to the whole area, some European Member States proposed the introduction of the Dublin Regulation as a defensive measure.⁷⁹ This Regulation provides that an asylum seeker's first European country of arrival is responsible for processing its asylum claim and must take care of either providing them permanent refuge or returning them to their country of origins depending on whether or not they meet the agreed criteria.⁸⁰ Unsurprisingly, this agreement delivered the whole burden of asylum-related matters to the Member States having an external border.⁸¹ Among these Italy and Greece are the main "countries of first arrival" in Europe for asylum seekers who arrive by sea.⁸² The introduction of the Dublin Regulation requires that, once arrived in Italy, asylum seekers have to be registered by the Italian authorities and are not allowed to move within the Schengen Area.⁸³ But at the time of the establishment of the Dublin Regulation the Italian economy was not large enough to take in such an influx of immigrants; indeed between 2007 and 2015 its per capita incomes declined by 11%.⁸⁴ Tensions between Italy and the European Union have emerged due to the increasing amount of asylum seekers' arrivals.⁸⁵ When Italy calls for burden-sharing policies, the other European countries question the effectiveness of Italian reception policies.⁸⁶ Moreover, in Italy the so-called 'refugee crisis'

⁷⁷ Betts and Collier, 63.

⁷⁸ Betts and Collier, 63.

⁷⁹ Betts and Collier, 64.

⁸⁰ Betts and Collier, 64.

⁸¹ Betts and Collier, 64.

⁸² Pietro Castelli Gattinara, «The 'Refugee Crisis' in Italy as a Crisis of Legitimacy», 2.

⁸³ Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refugee*, 69.

⁸⁴ Betts and Collier, 69.

⁸⁵ Pietro Castelli Gattinara, «The 'Refugee Crisis' in Italy as a Crisis of Legitimacy», 2.

⁸⁶ Castelli Gattinara, 2; Betts and Collier, *Refugee*, 71.

intensified tensions over cultural and religious diversity, created new sources of public spending and put pressure on border control.⁸⁷ These tensions had an impact on Italian politics especially in fuelling opposition among that large part of the Italian population already annoyed by a perceived loss of control over national matters due to Europeanisation.⁸⁸ It is interesting to note that ‘if before 2014 only one in four Italians agreed that migrants represented a threat to public order and security, by 2015 the share of people agreeing with this statement had reached 35 per cent, which grew to 40 per cent of respondents in 2016’.⁸⁹ These trends underline a quite straightforward relation between the increase of asylum-seekers arrivals and the worsening of public opinion about migration.⁹⁰

On a more general level the so-called ‘European migration crisis’ affected European societies by raising sentiments of mistrust and fear for changes in their living conditions due to the migration influx in their countries.⁹¹ As a consequence, in recent years the immigrant has become increasingly appointed as a ‘security issue’ in receiving countries.⁹² Such a label does not only refer to presumed terrorists but to all immigrants which are believed to affect national security in various ways.⁹³ As public confidence in the European way of managing migration collapsed and, while Brussels was under pressure searching for durable and burden-sharing solutions, far-right parties gained support in the European Member States that showed a common trend towards resorting to securitisation practices.⁹⁴ By the end of 2016, Europe became a ‘Fortress’.⁹⁵ As pointed out by Monish Bhatia, along with Betts and Collier⁹⁶, ‘the

⁸⁷ Castelli Gattinara, 2.

⁸⁸ Castelli Gattinara, 5.

⁸⁹ Castelli Gattinara, 6.

⁹⁰ Castelli Gattinara, 6.

⁹¹ Annette Jünemann, Nikolas Scherer, and Nicolas Fromm, «The Kaleidoscope of Migration», 1.

⁹² Cecilia Menjivar, «Immigration Law Beyond Borders», 355–56; Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia, «Frontiers of Fear».

⁹³ Menjivar, 355–56; d’Appollonia.

⁹⁴ Betts and Collier, *Refuge*, 3; Jünemann, Scherer, e Fromm, «The Kaleidoscope of Migration», 1.

⁹⁵ Jünemann, Scherer, e Fromm, 1.

⁹⁶ Betts and Collier, *Refuge*, 2.

urgency of the language of “crisis” disguises years of restrictionist policies and sheer political inaction to resolve a complex humanitarian situation. It also conveniently overlooks the escalation of border controls and policing measures to keep the “other” out.⁹⁷ Indeed, as of now, Europe mainly reacted to the so-called ‘crisis’ by reinforcing its frontiers and expanding measures of border control beyond the physical border, thus developing border externalisation practices.⁹⁸ As noted by Bill Frelick, in this context, outsourcing practices may serve as a means to limit the receiving countries’ legal obligations by preventing migrants from reaching their territory and, therefore, their jurisdiction.⁹⁹ These practices are often brought into play thanks to the help of the transit states that commit to clamping down on migration towards mainland Europe in exchange for various concessions by the powerful receiving countries.¹⁰⁰ Examples of such deals are the very controversial EU-Turkey deal and the memorandum of understanding between Italy and Libya signed in February 2017 which has been recently renewed for three more years.¹⁰¹

Aside from this, Italy made its own effort to prevent the thousands of drownings happening just off her shores by launching the rescue operation *Mare Nostrum* in 2013.¹⁰² It served to rescue asylum seekers who found themselves in distress while crossing the open sea and take them safely to shore in Italy.¹⁰³ Shortly after, in 2014, *Mare Nostrum* was abandoned as it was abused by human smugglers for delivering migrants to Europe more cheaply - they would deliberately abandon migrants in the open sea knowing a rescue attempt would be launched.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Monish Bhatia, «Seeking Refuge in Europe».

⁹⁸ Alexander Betts, *Forced migration and global politics*, 71–72; Cecilia Menjívar, «Immigration Law Beyond Borders».

⁹⁹ Bill Frelick, Ian M. Kysel, and Jennifer Podkul, «The Impact of Externalization of Migration Controls on the Rights of Asylum Seekers and Other Migrants», 197.

¹⁰⁰ Cecilia Menjívar, «Immigration Law Beyond Borders», 358.

¹⁰¹ «Memorandum of understanding between Libya and Italy».

¹⁰² Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge*, 68.

¹⁰³ Betts and Collier, 68.

¹⁰⁴ Betts and Collier, 68.

The project of *Humanitarian Corridors*

The most common use of the term ‘corridor’ by international organisations that deal with migration refers to the practice of allowing, on an exceptional basis, the passage of migrants and refugees through the ‘Western Balkans migration route’ established in 2015.¹⁰⁵ The term has also been employed in reference to the creation of a temporary demilitarised zone in order to ensure the passage of humanitarian aid in and/or of civilians out of a crisis region during the Syrian civil war.¹⁰⁶ It has also been referred to by other denominations such as ‘humanitarian corridors’ or ‘exit corridors’.¹⁰⁷ But those who manage to escape war might also be in need of safe passage to escape another deadly situation - the Mediterranean sea.¹⁰⁸ Hence, the decision to name the project *Humanitarian Corridors*. It is a means to designate the practice of private sponsorship being addressed to individuals potentially entitled to international protection.¹⁰⁹ In the broad context of international law, sponsorship is usually differentiated between governmental and private.¹¹⁰ As the names suggest, the former is a public practice and is exemplified by programmes like resettlement that allows for the ‘selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status’¹¹¹. Resettlement is a core refugee protection tool provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to allow safe and legal access to countries of the global North.¹¹² However, the total number of submissions and departures through resettlement programmes has been decreasing over the

¹⁰⁵ Neza Kogovsec Šalamon, «Mass Migration, Crimmigration and Defiance», 258.

¹⁰⁶ Pedro Gois and Giulia Falchi, “The Third Way. Humanitarian Corridors in Peacetime as a (Local) Civil Society Response to a EU’s Common Failure,” 67.

¹⁰⁷ UN News, “UN Envoy Cites Urgent Need to Establish 48 Hour Pause for Humanitarian Access to Aleppo.”

¹⁰⁸ Paolo Morozzo della Rocca, “I Due Protocolli d’intesa Sui ‘Corridoi Umanitari’ Tra Alcuni Enti Di Ispirazione Religiosa Ed Il Governo Ed Il Loro Possibile Impatto Sulle Politiche Di Asilo e Immigrazione.”

¹⁰⁹ Humanitarian Corridors Project, “Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale,” 7.

¹¹⁰ E.Y. Krivenko, “Hospitality and Sovereignty.”

¹¹¹ UNHCR, “Resettlement Handbook,” 3.

¹¹² European Union and Agency for Fundamental Rights, Legal Entry Channels to the EU for Persons in Need of International Protection.

years, shifting from 163,206 submissions in 2016 to 81,671 in 2019.¹¹³ By 7 October 2019, only 78% of the total resettlement pledges had been granted, leaving many refugees in a limbo.¹¹⁴ This problem led to the need for complementary forms of access to protection like private sponsorship programmes. Although they are not classified by a universally-agreed upon definition yet, they can be described as a practice in which ‘the government facilitates legal admission for refugees, and private actors provide financial, social and/or emotional support to welcome and receive refugees in their local community’.¹¹⁵ Canada constitutes one of the most significant examples of this practice: thanks to its long history of private sponsorship programmes more than 200,000 people have found protection there between 1979 and 2013.¹¹⁶

The same dynamic also characterises the Italian project which was conceived by civil society organisations who take care of its financial and reception aspects and is facilitated by the Italian authorities who run the necessary security checks and issue entry visas to let the beneficiaries legally access Italy.¹¹⁷ Indeed the project is the result of the synergy between state and non-state actors who negotiated the signature of the first memorandum of understanding between the Italian Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Community of Sant’Egidio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches (FCEI) and the Waldensian Evangelical Church.¹¹⁸ The agreement, signed in December 2015, granted more than one thousand visas for displaced Syrians coming from Lebanese refugee settlements.¹¹⁹ A further agreement between the parties, including the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), granted another five hundred visas to refugees from sub-Saharan Africa living in Ethiopia.¹²⁰ The

¹¹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Resettlement Data.”

¹¹⁴ European Commission, “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council,” 18.

¹¹⁵ European Resettlement Network, “Community-Based Private Sponsorship of Refugees.”

¹¹⁶ Canadian Council for Refugees, «Important changes in Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program».

¹¹⁷ Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale», 16–17.

¹¹⁸ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, “Humanitarian Corridors Are Open - From Italy a Signal of Hope for Europe.”

¹¹⁹ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, «Humanitarian Corridors in Europe».

¹²⁰ Comunità di Sant’Egidio.

partnership was preserved throughout the years leading to the signing of other such protocols with the latest being signed in May 2019 and lasting for a two-year period.¹²¹

As noted by Raffaele Marchetti, civil society organisations can be defined as non-governmental actors which play a role in different international domains.¹²² Furthermore, as argued by Daphné Josselin and William Wallace, civil society organisations such as non-governmental organisations and faith-based organisations are particularly relevant in transnational relations and so are the political implications of their work.¹²³ Marchetti further notes that the above mentioned synergy between non-governmental organisations¹²⁴ and the Italian authorities is part of a longstanding tradition that proved to be successful over the years in ‘effectively improving the capacity of both actors.’¹²⁵ It forms part of a relatively less studied type of relationship between governmental and non-governmental actors that focuses on their collaboration instead of their mutual competition.¹²⁶ Marchetti shows how this collaborative relationship is fruitful for both parties: the Italian government acquires international respectability thanks to the positive impact of the project, whereas the latter’s programme gains a positive reputation.¹²⁷

Going back to the organisations involved in the project, which will be referred to as faith-based or civil society organisations throughout the present thesis, the Christian Community of Sant’Egidio was born in 1968 and has been working since then to assist individuals marginalised by society and it is present in more than 70 countries worldwide;¹²⁸ the Federation of Evangelical Churches was established in 1967 and brings together most of

¹²¹ Humanitarian Corridors Project, “Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale,” 66–67.

¹²² Raffaele Marchetti, «Civil Society–Government Synergy and Normative Power Italy», 103.

¹²³ Daphne Josselin e William Wallace, *Non-State Actors in World Politics.*, 3,4.

¹²⁴ Due to their religious nature, they will also be referred to as faith-based organisations.

¹²⁵ Raffaele Marchetti, “Italian Hybrid Diplomacy,” 195.

¹²⁶ Marchetti, 195; Raffaele Marchetti, «Civil Society–Government Synergy and Normative Power Italy», 105.

¹²⁷ Marchetti, «Civil Society–Government Synergy and Normative Power Italy», 115–16.

¹²⁸ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, “The Community.”

the denominations of Protestantism in Italy and one of its objectives is the protection of disadvantaged people's civil rights.¹²⁹ In 2014, together with the Waldensian Church, it launched the *Mediterranean Hope* project that focuses on the reception and integration of asylum seekers.¹³⁰ The tragic shipwreck that took place close to the coastline of Lampedusa on 3 October 2013, responsible for the death of 386 migrants, and the several that followed constituted the triggering events that ultimately moved the abovementioned faith-based organisations from mere emotional empathy for the victims to the elaboration of a response to the issue.¹³¹ In the face of Europe's and Italy's failure in providing a united and effective response to these events, the Community of Sant'Egidio, together with the Federation of Evangelical Churches and the Waldensian Evangelical Church signed the first protocol with the Italian authorities and started the project. Thus, the creation of the pilot project in 2015 that is presented to have three main objectives: to avoid the death of people who try to cross the Mediterranean; to fight human smuggling and human trafficking; and to allow people in vulnerable situations to apply for international protection.¹³² The selection of beneficiaries takes place in the transit country where the migrant is currently living and is carried out by local associations, religious organisations and non-governmental organisations as well as the UNHCR and government agencies.¹³³ They all constitute a network of outside collaborators that did not sign the protocol. The selection of beneficiaries is based on the following criteria. First, vulnerability: understood as 'persons in the conditions described in European Directive 2013/33 of 26 June 2013 and in vulnerable conditions due to age, sex, state [and] of health (e.g. families with children, single mothers with children, disabled people, people with serious

¹²⁹ Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia, "Storia e Obiettivi Della FCEI."

¹³⁰ Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia, "Mediterranean Hope - Programma Rifugiati e Migranti."

¹³¹ Comunità di Sant'Egidio, «Humanitarian Corridors in Europe», 1–2.

¹³² Humanitarian Corridors Project, "Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale."

¹³³ Humanitarian Corridors Project.

illnesses, victims of trafficking, torture, violence)'.¹³⁴ Second, the potential for the individual to integrate in the hosting society: thus prioritising 'persons capable of completing the process of cultural, social and economic integration envisaged by the project in the host country and of starting a new life in a cultural context other than that of their origin or that of their country of residence'.¹³⁵ Having relatives in Italy is an important factor for this criteria.¹³⁶ Other criteria of selection include people recognised as refugees by the UNHCR, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and people whose lives and/or freedom are in danger.¹³⁷

Once the beneficiaries have been selected, the Italian authorities issue them a visa in accordance with Article 25 of the Visa Regulation (EC) 810/2009. This article provides a Member State with the possibility to issue humanitarian visas with limited territorial validity when considered necessary on humanitarian grounds, for reasons of national interest or because of international obligations.¹³⁸ The release of the visa allows the beneficiaries to legally fly to Italy and file an asylum application upon arrival.¹³⁹ This step makes the Italian authorities' participation in the project essential for its implementation since without their approval to issue the visas the beneficiaries would not have a legal means to access Italy. Three different security checks are eventually carried out by both the authorities in the transit country and those in the destination country and the names of the beneficiaries are entered in the Schengen database.¹⁴⁰ These steps aim not only at providing a safe and legal pathway to enter Europe by fighting

¹³⁴ «Protocollo di intesa per la realizzazione del progetto "apertura di corridoi umanitari"», Art.3; Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale», 13–14.

¹³⁵ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 14.

¹³⁶ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 13–14; «Protocollo di intesa per la realizzazione del progetto "apertura di corridoi umanitari"», Art. 3.

¹³⁷ «Protocollo di intesa per la realizzazione del progetto "apertura di corridoi umanitari", Art.3; Humanitarian Corridors Project, 13–14.

¹³⁸ "Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 Establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code)."

¹³⁹ Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale», 17.

¹⁴⁰ Humanitarian Corridors Project.

human trafficking and smuggling, but also at meeting the national need for security by carrying out different levels of checks before departure.¹⁴¹ The security aspect of the project appears to be particularly important for both the Italian authorities and the faith-based organisations. In this regard, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs describes the project on its website as ‘a way of also meeting our need of security’.¹⁴² Similarly the Community of Sant’Egidio states on its website: ‘It is a safe way for everyone: the release of humanitarian visas provides for all necessary checks run by the Italian authorities’.¹⁴³

Once the beneficiaries arrive in Italy they receive local organisations’ support while applying for international protection.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, the sponsor organisations are responsible for post-arrival logistical, financial and integration activities.¹⁴⁵ The faith-based organisations completely financed the project which in turn requires no economical contribution from the state.¹⁴⁶ This is possible not only thanks to the sponsors’ fundraising and ‘Eight per Thousand’¹⁴⁷ contributions, but also to private donors, labor unions and other religious communities.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, thanks to the sponsors’ widespread presence on the national territory, they are able to put into practice the so-called *widespread reception system* which differs in many ways from the usual Italian reception system, briefly introduced in the following.

The Protection System for Holders of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (commonly referred to by its acronym SIPROIMI), previously known as the

¹⁴¹ Humanitarian Corridors Project.

¹⁴² Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione internazionale, «Humanitarian corridors».

¹⁴³ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, «Humanitarian Corridors for refugees».

¹⁴⁴ Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale», 17.

¹⁴⁵ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 17.

¹⁴⁶ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 89.

¹⁴⁷ A translation for the Italian term “otto per mille” which refers to an Italian law that requires taxpayers to devolve a compulsory percentage, equivalent to 0,8% of their annual income tax return, to a religious organisation or to a social security scheme of the Italian State.

¹⁴⁸ Francesco Rolando and Naso Paolo, “Humanitarian Corridors to Italy,” 65.

System for Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), is the Italian designated entity to manage the reception of people forced to migrate. It provides accommodation, food, legal support, professional training, education, and social assistance to facilitate integration.¹⁴⁹ Although its funding and capacity have increased over the years, it is only able to respond to 20% of the national reception demand.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, SIPROIMI centres were flanked by Emergency Reception Centres (CAS) which were designed to be a temporary and preparatory solution for the former, but have ended up accounting for the greatest part of the national reception system.¹⁵¹ The Emergency Reception Centres are often run by unprepared and/or overloaded staff and the facilities are often considered unsuitable for the reception of asylum seekers.¹⁵² According to an annual report of *Médecins sans Frontières* many of them lack hygiene, are in very remote locations and the services provided have low standards.¹⁵³ Moreover, Emergency Reception Centres create problematic situations for those whose asylum claim has been processed and to whom some sort of protection has been granted, since they are asked to leave the Emergency Reception Centres and are considered as self-sufficient individuals which is frequently not the case due to the scarce reception assistance they were provided throughout their stay.¹⁵⁴ Thus, in most cases, they end up being homeless and reliant on the black market - invisible to the Italian society.¹⁵⁵

This is the mechanism that the widespread reception system wants to avoid. Reception is arranged by the Italian civil society and beneficiaries are hosted by local families, communities and organisations all over Italy. They provide for basic needs such as shelter and

¹⁴⁹ Pedro Gois and Giulia Falchi, “The Third Way. Humanitarian Corridors in Peacetime as a (Local) Civil Society Response to a EU’s Common Failure,” 69.

¹⁵⁰ Gois and Falchi, 69.

¹⁵¹ Gois e Falchi, 69–70.

¹⁵² Gois and Falchi, 70.

¹⁵³ Médecins Sans Frontières, “Out of Sight. Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Italy: Informal Settlements and Social Marginalization.”

¹⁵⁴ Médecins Sans Frontières, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Pedro Gois and Giulia Falchi, “The Third Way. Humanitarian Corridors in Peacetime as a (Local) Civil Society Response to a EU’s Common Failure.”

food but also facilitate access to the healthcare system and provide legal guidance during the asylum application process.¹⁵⁶ This reception system is strongly focused on increasing the chances of the beneficiaries to integrate as it facilitates the beneficiaries' ability to learn Italian by providing language and culture courses, assists them in approaching the job market and provides support for the inclusion of their children in the school system through extra-curricular assistance.¹⁵⁷

As of now, 100% of the beneficiaries have been granted asylum and out of 1011 refugees admitted thanks to the first protocol and, after two years of reception, '151 people have achieved full autonomy and 304 have achieved semi-autonomy, that is, they depend on the associations only for housing'.¹⁵⁸ These numbers, despite being low, portray quite a positive result, especially considering that the beneficiaries are vulnerable individuals and that children are about 40% of the total number of refugees accepted.¹⁵⁹ Last but not least - it is cheaper. As mentioned above, the widespread reception system is possible thanks to volunteers and local communities that collaborate with the sponsor organisations without financial compensation.¹⁶⁰

The *Humanitarian Corridors* project has, up until December 2019, resettled almost 3000 beneficiaries previously residing in Lebanon, Ethiopia and Lesbos to Italy.¹⁶¹ The number of beneficiaries is quite low when compared to the amount of asylum seekers that illegally enter Italy every year which amounted to 11,471 in 2019 according to the Italian Ministry of the Interior.¹⁶² These numbers were even higher during the previous years - peaking in 2016.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁶ Luciano Griso, "Humanitarian Corridors: A Road to Life," 186.

¹⁵⁷ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 'Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale', 52.

¹⁵⁸ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 77.

¹⁵⁹ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 77.

¹⁶⁰ Paolo Morozzo della Rocca, "I Due Protocolli d'intesa Sui 'Corridoi Umanitari' Tra Alcuni Enti Di Ispirazione Religiosa Ed Il Governo Ed Il Loro Possibile Impatto Sulle Politiche Di Asilo e Immigrazione," 27.

¹⁶¹ Comunità di Sant'Egidio, "I Corridoi Umanitari in Cifre."

¹⁶² Ministero dell'Interno, "Sbarchi e Accoglienza Dei Migranti: Tutti i Dati."

¹⁶³ European Commission e European Political Strategy Centre, *Irregular Migration via the Central Mediterranean from Emergency Responses to Systemic Solutions*.

The reason for such a low number of beneficiaries is not explicitly provided in the official documents on the project; it could be assumed that it is due to the limited availability of resources by the sponsoring organisation or to a maximum amount of visa granted by the Italian government. Despite these low numbers, the project attracted the attention of European institutions that recently funded a study of the project aiming at evaluating the possibility of expanding it on a European scale.¹⁶⁴ So far, European Member States, such as Belgium and France, and the Principality of Andorra have followed Italy's lead and implemented the project.¹⁶⁵

Against the background of the growing use of the abovementioned outsourcing and security-obsessed practices in Europe, the project presented in this paper seems to portray a quite opposing trend. Offering asylum seekers a safe and legal way to enter Europe and access to protection constitutes quite a different practice than signing deals with transit countries to prevent migrants from reaching Europe. Rather than classifying asylum seekers as a security threat, as done by the authors of these deals, it seems that providing a more positive narrative is the main goal of the faith-based organisations involved in the planning of *Humanitarian Corridors*.

The chapter above presented an account of the circumstances and reasons leading to the implementation of *Humanitarian Corridors*. The motives presented by the sponsoring organisations, as well as additional material, will be further discussed and problematised in the analysis in light of the chosen theories; the theories will serve as lenses through which one can interpret the case and answer the research question. The next chapter, after providing an

¹⁶⁴ Humanitarian Corridors Project, "Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale"; Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Directorate Migration and Protection, and MPI Europe, "Study on the Feasibility and Added Value of Sponsorship Schemes as a Possible Pathway to Safe Channels for Admission to the EU, Including Resettlement."

¹⁶⁵ See Humanitarian Corridors Project, "Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale."

operational and theoretical presentation of the complex realm of humanitarianism, will introduce the reader to the theories of Michael Barnett and Didier Fassin, shedding light on the humanitarian dynamics described in their works.

Theoretical framework

The following chapter will contextualise the present thesis within existing literature on humanitarianism. First, the chapter will elaborate on a more general and operational understanding of humanitarianism. Second, a literature review of prior relevant studies will present the theoretical debate on humanitarianism enabling a better interpretation of the topic and supporting the chosen theories. The works by Michael Barnett and Didier Fassin that constitute the main foundation of the following chapter will be presented and compared to allow a deeper understanding of the research topic. Although following different reasonings their works present similar outcomes. They will provide the knowledge to interpret the case-study and later address the research question.

Literature Review

The most common characterisation of humanitarianism is that of a practice that aims at the improvement of the human condition by relieving suffering and saving lives in times of emergency.¹⁶⁶ In other words ‘it is a way to do good’¹⁶⁷ for example by providing medical assistance, shelter and food during or right after disasters or wartimes.¹⁶⁸

The most famous organisation working in the humanitarian field is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC has the mandate of protecting and assisting victims of armed conflicts as well as safeguarding and promoting international humanitarian law.¹⁶⁹ The organisation was established in 1863 and operates worldwide in compliance with the provisions of the four Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocol I as well as with the principles of its Code of Conduct.¹⁷⁰ The Red Cross’ understanding of humanitarianism seemingly refers to the provision of relief for victims of violence while observing its

¹⁶⁶ Miriam Ticktin, “Transnational Humanitarianism”, 274.

¹⁶⁷ Ticktin, 274.

¹⁶⁸ Ticktin, 274.

¹⁶⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross, «Who We Are».

¹⁷⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross.

fundamental principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.¹⁷¹ The first requires respect for all human beings; the second commands that assistance is given regardless of nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions; neutrality asks the organisation not to take part in any conflict; independence calls for the complete autonomy of the ICRC; the fifth ensures the non-profit character of the institution; whereas the final two insist on the unity of the organisation across the globe.¹⁷² The first four principles are commonly accepted as the constitutive values of humanitarianism according to the ICRC and have been created to ensure the reliability of the institution.¹⁷³

From an academic perspective, the concept of humanitarianism does not allow for an easy definition. ‘It is, among other things, an ethos, a cluster of sentiments, a set of laws, a moral imperative to intervene, and a form of government.’¹⁷⁴ Humanitarianism is usually presented through a binary definition between ethics and politics.¹⁷⁵ As Barnett puts it: ‘humanitarianism presents itself as living in a world of ethics, constantly battling the forces of evil and indifference.’¹⁷⁶ This binary representation allows for an understanding of humanitarianism as a “good guy” that fights against the injustices of the contemporary world. It derives the common belief that humanitarian interventions are an unquestionable positive practice, as they aim at relieving suffering.¹⁷⁷ This deontological position¹⁷⁸ frequently derives from a Kantian claim that ‘some actions are simply good in and of themselves regardless of their consequences’.¹⁷⁹ Thus, ethical action requires one to identify these fundamentally good

¹⁷¹ Jean Pictet, «The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross».

¹⁷² Pictet.

¹⁷³ Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, 5; Jérémie Labbé and Pascal Daudin, «Applying the Humanitarian Principles», 184; Michael Barnett, *Humanitarianism Contested*, 9.

¹⁷⁴ Miriam Ticktin, “Transnational Humanitarianism,” 274.

¹⁷⁵ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 6.

¹⁷⁶ Barnett, 6.

¹⁷⁷ Miriam Ticktin, “Transnational Humanitarianism,” 277.

¹⁷⁸ Adam Augustyn et al., «Deontological ethics». In deontological ethics, the product of the action does not necessarily have to be good; rather it is considered morally good by its characteristics. It holds that regardless of their consequences for human welfare at least some acts are morally obligatory.

¹⁷⁹ Michael Barnett and Thomas Weiss, *Humanitarianism in Question*, 43.

actions and to accomplish them in the name of the obligations we have to others in respect of our collective humanity.¹⁸⁰ In this light, humanitarian action is thus intrinsically good and morally unquestionable.

Historians have different views concerning the advent of humanitarianism.¹⁸¹ However, it is generally agreed that in the late 1980s, due to the rise of transnational Non-Governmental Organisations, humanitarianism began to acquire particular moral and political connotations.¹⁸² Moreover, over the last decades a major debate has developed with regard to the role of humanitarian organisations and activists and their involvement in global politics. The ‘humanitarian’ label has often been used by many Western governments to justify their political and military strategies in times of peace as well as in times of war.¹⁸³ The lack of a clear definition of humanitarianism, as well as of boundaries circumscribing what can be considered as humanitarian and what not¹⁸⁴, bring out many questions related to humanitarianism including: What is humanitarianism? Is humanitarianism a good or a bad thing? What are its side-effects? What is the relationship between humanitarianism and politics?

Various scholars have been trying to address these issues. In the 2000s, scholars began engaging in criticising humanitarianism - often suggesting that they should be abandoned.¹⁸⁵ Some authors focused on its power to establish and sustain global relations of domination¹⁸⁶, whereas others highlighted its ability as a means to clear wealthy people’s consciences from the burden of enriching themselves on someone else’s shoulders.¹⁸⁷ Others elaborated instead on the consequences of resorting to violence in the name of humanitarian values.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁰ Barnett and Weiss, 43–44.

¹⁸¹ Miriam Ticktin, “Transnational Humanitarianism,” 274.

¹⁸² Ticktin, 274.

¹⁸³ Ticktin, 282–83; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, xi; Micheal Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 4.

¹⁸⁴ B. S. Chimni, “Globalization, Humanitarianism and the Erosion of Refugee Protection”; Miriam Ticktin, “Transnational Humanitarianism.”

¹⁸⁵ Ticktin

¹⁸⁶ B. S. Chimni, “Globalization, Humanitarianism and the Erosion of Refugee Protection.”

¹⁸⁷ Ilan Kapoor, *Celebrity Humanitarianism*.

¹⁸⁸ Maya Zehfuss, *War and the Politics of Ethics*; Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention*; Ronan O’Callaghan, *Walzer, Just War and Iraq*.

Overall, as shown above, most scholars treated humanitarianism either as untouchable or as an evil creature - disregarding any nuances and resorting to two very opposite narratives. The most relevant contribution of Didier Fassin and Michael Barnett to the debate over humanitarianism lies in their refusal to adhere to a romanticised or to a skeptical vision of humanitarianism but rather to treat the concept as a complex one. Both authors focus on this controversial phenomena as their object of study in order to unveil its global logics by raising multiple ethical and political issues.¹⁸⁹ The two authors reason differently in their study of humanitarianism, but their works present very similar outcomes. Their thoughts will be presented in the following and related to each other, in order to form a coherent framework for the analysis to come.

The works of Michael Barnett and Didier Fassin

Michael Barnett's contribution to the debate over humanitarianism, *Empire of Humanity: a history of humanitarianism*, provides a framework which aims at outlining many of the dilemmas of humanitarianism and at contextualising them in an ever-changing global context. He adopts a global-historical view of western humanitarianism to look at its pattern of evolution and to shed light on some intrinsic characteristics and dynamics.¹⁹⁰ His analysis takes into account historical, geopolitical, economic and social factors in order to reveal the way in which the global context shapes the very meaning of humanitarianism.

On the other hand, the French anthropologist Didier Fassin appears more interested in understanding the role that humanitarianism plays in today's politics and the losses and gains that may be incurred when humanitarianism and politics merge. His theorisation of humanitarianism aims to unveil the meaning and value of human lives concealed in humanitarian practices.¹⁹¹ In his ethnographic book *Humanitarian Reason: a moral history of*

¹⁸⁹ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 244–46; Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 7.

¹⁹⁰ Barnett, 7-8,15.

¹⁹¹ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 226.

the present, Fassin, along with Barnett, underlines how ‘humanitarianism has become a potent force of our world’¹⁹² and occupies an important place especially in the post Cold War era.¹⁹³ On the one hand, Fassin defines humanitarianism as a way of governing precarious lives through the mobilisation of empathy and compassion that involves both governmental and non-governmental actors as well as international organisations.¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, Barnett describes humanitarianism as a ‘morally complicated creature, a flawed hero defined by the passions, politics, and power of its times even as it tries to rise above them’.¹⁹⁵ It is a constantly changing concept characterised by an ‘unstable balance’ between irreconcilable contradictory elements and intrinsic tensions.¹⁹⁶ Among these elements and tensions, the ones between ethics and politics, emancipation and domination, paternalism and progress, humanity and inhumanity.¹⁹⁷ Both authors think that humanitarianism is founded on an unequal relationship between the giver and the receiver of humanitarian aid.¹⁹⁸

In his book Barnett, distinguishes between three ages of humanitarianism: Imperial humanitarianism, Neo-humanitarianism and Liberal-humanitarianism, and notes how the changes from one era to the next reveal an expansion in terms of governance of humanitarianism, which has become ‘increasingly public, hierarchical, and institutionalised’.¹⁹⁹ He observes that humanitarianism found its greatest moments of expansion right after periods of extraordinary violence and inhumanity such as wars or humanitarian emergencies.²⁰⁰ But how can the rapid development of institutions of compassion over the last centuries be explained? He argues that Western society tend to build them in response to an internal crisis: the one in faith; a response arising from the refusal to accept that

¹⁹² Fassin, x.

¹⁹³ Fassin, 223.

¹⁹⁴ Fassin, x.

¹⁹⁵ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Barnett, 8.

¹⁹⁷ Barnett, 9–15.

¹⁹⁸ Barnett, 34; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Barnett, 8,29.

²⁰⁰ Barnett, 8.

our society is capable of such actions.²⁰¹ Inhumane behaviours and events challenge our confidence in our own humanity and the idea that moral progress is possible; hence, the need for acts of humanity to prove to ourselves that we are still good individuals.²⁰² This entails that humanitarianism is not only about the needs of those who are subject to it but also of those who act in the name of it.

Fassin's collection of different narratives on humanitarianism shows how Western society's present is marked by the emergence of a new moral economy of suffering which he calls *humanitarian reason*.²⁰³ By analysing how it is employed in different settings and through different fields, he underlines that the real essence of it is embodied in the concept of *humanitarian government*: a mode of governing driven by moral sentiments whose roots lie in religion.²⁰⁴ Fassin argues that despite the gradual secularisation of our society, Christian values of sacredness of life and valorisation of suffering are the core of today's Western political and democratic values.²⁰⁵ Christian tradition teaches that redemption from humanity's sins is achieved through suffering, but 'with the entry of suffering into politics, we might say that salvation emanates not through the passion one endures, but through the compassion one feels. And this moral sentiment in turn becomes a source of action, because we seek to correct the situation that gives rise to the misfortune of others'.²⁰⁶ Therefore, humanitarian government, placing life and suffering at the centre of its moral economies, becomes a form of political theology, because it brings together religion and politics.²⁰⁷ Humanitarian government represents 'the response made by our societies to what is intolerable about the state of the contemporary world', naming its intrinsic inequality and injustice.²⁰⁸ Thus affirms Fassin:

²⁰¹ Barnett, 26.

²⁰² Barnett, 26.

²⁰³ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, xii.

²⁰⁴ Fassin, 1,7.

²⁰⁵ Fassin, 248.

²⁰⁶ Fassin, 250.

²⁰⁷ Fassin, 251.

²⁰⁸ Fassin, 252.

‘humanitarian government has a salutary power for us because by saving lives, it saves something of our idea of ourselves, and because by relieving suffering, it also relieves the burden of this unequal world order.’²⁰⁹ Furthermore, it restores our collective sentiment of humanity and creates a feeling of closeness between the giver and the receiver of humanitarian aid.²¹⁰

Following this reasoning, Barnett points out that ‘humanitarian governance may have its heart in the right place, but it is still a form of governance, and governance always includes power’.²¹¹ Indeed, the aim of humanitarianism to improve the welfare of those who might not be in a position to help themselves often entails an act of intervention.²¹² But any act of intervention also constitutes an act of power; an act based on the giver’s paternalistic assumption of knowing what is needed by the recipients in order to improve their lives without giving them the occasion to express it themselves.²¹³ Thus, doing humanitarian work generates controversial ethical issues that humanitarians should be aware of; indeed, the act of giving a ‘gift’ in the name of compassion often generates new forms of dependency and obligation that enhance the distance between who gives and who receives rather than making their relationship more equal.²¹⁴

Similarly, Fassin underlines how a humanitarian government is characterised by tension between a relationship of domination and one of assistance that creates an imbalance between the giver and the receiver of humanitarian action.²¹⁵ Unlike Barnett though, he argues that this unavoidable and socially instituted relationship of inequality results from the act of presenting what constitutes the grant of a right as a moral obligation.²¹⁶ This mechanism makes

²⁰⁹ Fassin, 252.

²¹⁰ Fassin, 252.

²¹¹ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 12.

²¹² Barnett, 12.

²¹³ Barnett, 12.

²¹⁴ Barnett, 34.

²¹⁵ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 3.

²¹⁶ Fassin, 8.

the receivers of humanitarian action victims and pure beneficiaries of something that is rightfully theirs as it lacks recognition to ‘a right beyond any obligation’.²¹⁷ It can be argued that ‘the apparently disinterested gift assumes a counter-gift in the form of an obligation linking the receiver to the benefactor’²¹⁸. However, the humanitarian sentiment of compassion does not allow for reciprocity and the relationship of this exchange remains therefore unequal.²¹⁹

Barnett concludes by arguing that, in the end, humanitarianism is a matter of faith. Along with Fassin²²⁰, he traces the origins of humanitarianism to religion, and, for this reason, religious discourses are central in the study of humanitarianism. This stems from the transcendent sentiment of living in a world that goes beyond tangible reality and the consequent desire to create a global spirit despite its tensions.²²¹ Therefore, despite humanitarianism being increasingly morally compromised, it is the presence of faith that holds everything together and that gives humanitarians hope for progress.²²² Yet Barnett refers to it as a kind of clear-headed, critical faith that entails the ability to reflect critically on the role of humanitarians and question the consequences of their actions and the reasons behind them in order to understand what does and what does not work.²²³ The organisations’ ability to reflect on their role is also relevant with regards to the often necessary cooperation with governments that are getting more and more involved in the humanitarian field.²²⁴ Humanitarianism has always been deeply intertwined with the realm of politics but the intervention of states within humanitarian affairs has grown together with globalisation.²²⁵ Consequently, humanitarian organisations became more and more involved in pursuing agendas that reflected the

²¹⁷ Fassin, 254–55.

²¹⁸ Fassin, 3.

²¹⁹ Fassin, 3.

²²⁰ Fassin, 248.

²²¹ Barnett, 20.

²²² Barnett, 239.

²²³ Barnett, 9,239.

²²⁴ Barnett, 3–6.

²²⁵ Barnett, 31–32.

governments' priorities, thus turning them into a tool for achieving strategic objectives;²²⁶ according to Barnett, '[i]f states believe, for whatever reason, that there is a convergence between their security interests and humanitarian action, then aid agencies will find new opportunities in the field and beyond; if otherwise, then they will confront significant barriers'.²²⁷ But the more humanitarian organisations are involved in matters of governance, the more they have to engage in ethical considerations about the power they derive from it.²²⁸ Yet, what is certain is that humanitarian actors depend on state actors for their resources which will likely affect their choices and opportunities.²²⁹ Some might decide to make deals with them while others might pretend to ignore the world of politics, but certainly both approaches have their consequences.²³⁰

The works by Fassin and Barnett allows one to challenge the visions of humanitarianism that exclusively focus on its positive or negative impact on the lives of those in need. By refusing to take for granted the morally untouchable phenomenon of humanitarianism, the authors refrain from dualistic judgements about it while carefully shedding light on its diverse side-effects. The following chapter will try to follow this trend in looking at the project of *Humanitarian Corridors* using this framework. It will try to answer the research questions by challenging aspects of the project that may appear as self-evident or 'morally untouchable.'²³¹ Moreover, it will not merely focus on its positive impact already underlined by previous studies on the topic but will rather try to disclose possible manifestations of obscured controversial dynamics making use of the theories described above.

²²⁶ Barnett, 32.

²²⁷ Barnett, 23.

²²⁸ Barnett, 33–37.

²²⁹ Barnett, 22.

²³⁰ Barnett, 196–98.

²³¹ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 244.

In doing so, it aims at providing a constructive critique of the project and it keeps from being a mere destructive criticism of it.

Analysis & Discussion

The *Humanitarian Corridors* project is rarely criticised and has primarily been framed as an example of good practice.²³² However, looking at this project in the light of Barnett's and Didier's considerations about humanitarianism might reveal some mechanisms and side-effects that have not been discussed in the previous studies on this topic. In order to do so, the following analysis will firstly focus on understanding, through the lenses of the discussed theoretical considerations, the reasons behind the conception of the project going beyond the ones presented by the sponsor organisations. Secondly, it will investigate whether such reasons had any effect on the projects' implementation. Lastly, a discussion of the analysis main findings will take place. Thus the analysis will attempt to answer the following research questions:

Why was the project of Humanitarian Corridors conceived?

and secondly,

Did the reasons for its conception lead to any consequences on how the project is implemented and run? If so, which ones?

and therefore partake in a discussion on the reasons behind *Humanitarian Corridors'* implementation along with the potential influence these reasons may have had on the way the project is put into effect and managed.

Although the faith-based organisations involved in the *Humanitarian Corridors* project do not explicitly state their humanitarian nature, they display some typical characteristics of humanitarian organisations. As a matter of fact, as abovementioned in the context, they present themselves as being dedicated to the people living in the margins of society.²³³ Additionally,

²³² Comunità di Sant'Egidio, «Humanitarian Corridors in Europe», 2.

²³³ Comunità di Sant'Egidio, «The Community»; Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia, «Storia e obiettivi della FCEI».

the humanitarian nature of the project is displayed not only by the presence of the word ‘humanitarian’ in its name, but also by the fact that it was inspired by humanitarian purposes.²³⁴ Consequently, in the following analysis the project’s sponsoring organisations will be treated as humanitarians and their work will be analysed in the light of the humanitarian dynamics expressed in the theoretical framework.

Humanitarian corridors as a means to achieve redemption

As previously described, the project can be set in a European context characterised by handling migration as a crisis which results in prioritising emergency responses such as preventing the departure of migrants from transit countries and deploying often unsuccessful search and rescue operations for those who manage to leave.²³⁵ This approach is chosen by European states over a strategy of recognising the asylum seekers’ right to migrate and focusing on facilitating and legalising their movements. One could conclude that the faith-based organisations involved in the *Humanitarian Corridors* project have displayed the intent to pursue the second approach. Indeed, the project was born from the question: ‘how can we avoid the deaths of thousands of people, including children, in the Mediterranean Sea?’²³⁶ The Community of Sant’Egidio then stated: ‘we have not been looking at these deeply unjust deaths, but we have dreamed of forcing the inertia [of years of inaction] and opening a legal and safe way [for migration]’.²³⁷ In the face of such events, a sentiment of compassion²³⁸ towards individuals forced to flee their country and to face dangerous journeys filled with hope for a better future is identifiable. It could be argued, following Fassin, that this sentiment stems from Western societies’ Christian heritage which drives people to highly value life and

²³⁴ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, «Humanitarian Corridors in Europe», 1–2.

²³⁵ Monish Bhatia, «Seeking Refuge in Europe».

²³⁶ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, «Humanitarian Corridors for refugee».

²³⁷ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, «Humanitarian Corridors in Europe», 4.

²³⁸ Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, 26; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 250.

suffering.²³⁹ Therefore, the implementation of the project could be seen as an attempt to reach redemption from Italians' and Europeans' sin of being inert in front of migrants' suffering by feeling compassion towards their 'precarious lives'.²⁴⁰ The latter translates into the organisation's will to act in order to change the unjust situation migrants find themselves in and alleviate their suffering.²⁴¹ Interpreting this situation through Barnett's eyes, the European and Italian response to the migratory phenomenon challenges the faith-based organisations' confidence in their own goodness and in our society's humanity thus generating a crisis in faith.²⁴² One could interpret that such a crisis pushes the sponsoring organisations to question their own role in the so-called 'refugee crisis'²⁴³ and to restore their own moral integrity, perceived as damaged by the European and Italian aforementioned inaction, by taking action and implementing the *Humanitarian Corridors* project.²⁴⁴ Thus, a project that, from a superficial point of view, appears as purely altruistic turns out to also be a way for the sponsoring organisations to prove and regain faith in their goodness.²⁴⁵ Indeed, saving migrants' lives and alleviating their suffering enables the faith-based organisations to ease their guilt over a world of inequalities by feeling closer to those they are helping.²⁴⁶ Therefore, one could argue that this willingness of the faith-based organisations to achieve redemption constitutes one of the reasons for the conception of the project.

Yet the mobilisation of compassion always carries along some implications, and it also carries them when used in the governing of migrants' precarious lives.²⁴⁷ Among them, the establishment of an unequal power relationship which derives from the very act of doing

²³⁹ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 248.

²⁴⁰ Fassin, 250–53.

²⁴¹ Fassin, 250.

²⁴² Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 26.

²⁴³ Pedro Gois e Giulia Falchi, «The third way. Humanitarian corridors in peacetime as a (local) civil society response to a EU's common failure», 62.

²⁴⁴ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 26.

²⁴⁵ Barnett, 26; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 252.

²⁴⁶ Fassin, 252.

²⁴⁷ Fassin, 8; Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 34.

something for the migrants.²⁴⁸ Indeed, by deciding to help them out of compassion, the faith-based organisations create an unbalanced relationship between themselves and the potential asylum seekers; a relationship based on the former's goodwill to give the possibility to the latter to enter the Italian territory and apply for protection. Yet it could be argued that what is being given is actually something that they should be receiving regardless of the organisation's goodwill. Article 10 of the Italian Constitution provides that 'a foreigner who, in his home country, is denied the actual exercise of the democratic freedoms guaranteed by the Italian constitution shall be entitled to the right of asylum under the conditions established by law'.²⁴⁹ Its scope therefore protects any person who cannot enjoy the same freedoms that an Italian citizen can. Moreover, the 1951 Refugee Convention provides a definition of refugee²⁵⁰ and in its article 33 establishes the principle of *non-refoulement*, according to which no one should be returned to a country where they would be in danger of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.²⁵¹ Even though the 1951 Refugee Convention does not explicitly restrict its validity to a specific territory, it is generally interpreted as implying a foreigner is only recognised the right to apply for asylum if they are physically present in the territory of that state.²⁵² Is it then a mandatory requirement to leave for a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean in order to apply for asylum? The debate over the extraterritorial validity of international refugee law, as well as of international human rights law, still seems to be open. As noted by Theodor Meron and by Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, the argument in favour of the application *ratione loci* of international law

²⁴⁸ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 34; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 3–8.

²⁴⁹ Senate of the Italian Republic, "Constitution of the Italian Republic."

²⁵⁰ Article 1A(2) provides that the term 'refugee' applies to any individual "owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

²⁵¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees."

²⁵² Christopher Hein and Maria de Donato, «Exploring avenues for protected entry in Europe».

is built upon the assumption that its validity is limited to the people over whom the state exercises its jurisdiction, namely the residents within its territory.²⁵³ However, along with Lauterpacht and Bethlehem²⁵⁴, Noll points out that Article 1.3 of the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees supports the extraterritorial applicability of the 1951 Convention thus applying also to its article 33 protecting asylum seekers from refoulement.²⁵⁵ He affirms indeed that ‘[...] it could be adduced that article 33 (1) CSR51 [(the 1951 Refugee Convention)] speaks of expulsion, return or refoulement to the frontiers of territories where certain risks prevail. In the light of these words, it appears to be immaterial for the enjoyment of benefits under article 33 (1) CSR51 [(the 1951 Refugee Convention)] whether or not a person is located on state territory, as the emphasis is on the final destination of displacement, not its starting point.’²⁵⁶ Moreover, Article 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights calls on states to safeguard the rights and freedom defined in its first section; among this first section is article 3.²⁵⁷ The latter states that ‘no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’.²⁵⁸ It follows that any person who flees from harm, as intended by article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, should enjoy the right to be protected by a Contracting State even if they are located outside of the state’s territory by being provided an entry visa to reach the state in which they want to file the application of asylum.²⁵⁹ Reflecting on the role of externalisation policies, it is worth noting that ‘the more efficient states are in blocking access to territory, and the scarcer the protection offer in the region of origin is, the more convincing is an argument to the effect that the grant of an entry visa remains the sole avenue to avoid

²⁵³ Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, *Access to Asylum*, 89; Theodor Meron, «Extraterritoriality of Human Rights Treaties», 82.

²⁵⁴ Sir Elihu Lauterpacht and Daniel Bethlehem, «The Scope and Content of the Principle of Non-Refoulement», 82–83.

²⁵⁵ Gregor Noll, “Seeking Asylum at Embassies,” 553; Sir Elihu Lauterpacht and Daniel Bethlehem, “The Scope and Content of the Principle of Non-Refoulement,” para. 84.

²⁵⁶ Noll, 553.

²⁵⁷ European Court of Human Rights, “European Convention on Human Rights.”

²⁵⁸ European Court of Human Rights.

²⁵⁹ Gregor Noll, “Seeking Asylum at Embassies,” 572.

torture or other relevant forms of ill-treatment'.²⁶⁰ Needless to say that the grant of an entry visa does not constitute a right to protection; its purpose is to allow the evaluation of the case to take place in the state of destination and the latter is allowed to deport the applicants if they do not fall within the parameters that give access to protection.²⁶¹ Thus, although it could be argued that being given an entry visa to Italy is a right of asylum seekers when there is a potential need for protection, the faith-based organisations seem to present themselves as good-hearted people who decided to provide them with it out of their goodwill. In this way, the act of helping them to safely and legally enter Europe seems to be portrayed as a concession or a gift given out of moral obligation.²⁶²

Following Fassin, it is important to question what are the benefits and losses incurred and what are the implications when mobilising compassion in the name of humanitarianism rather than respecting legal rights in the name of justice²⁶³ Indeed, when questioned, such framing appears to constitute grounds for the establishment of an unbalanced relationship in which the potential asylum seekers appear as victims and mere beneficiaries of humanitarian aid delivered by the helpful, compassionate humanitarians.²⁶⁴ One can say that allowing them to safely enter in Italy on the basis of compassion rather than on that of their right implies their recognition with an arguably inferior position to the one they should be entitled: the granting of their right via compassion is presented as a pure act of benevolence; the legitimacy of their claim to the right is overshadowed by the debt they incur by receiving this compassionate act.²⁶⁵ At the same time, as discussed in the theoretical framework, notwithstanding the altruistic nature of the act of helping others, it constitutes an act of intervention which in turn implies the

²⁶⁰ Gregor Noll, "Seeking Asylum at Embassies," 573.

²⁶¹ Noll, "Seeking Asylum at Embassies," 565.

²⁶² Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 8.

²⁶³ Fassin, 8.

²⁶⁴ Fassin, 253–55.

²⁶⁵ Fassin, 80–81.

exercise of power.²⁶⁶ Barnett would see it as a result of the faith-based organisations' assumption to know the beneficiaries' needs.²⁶⁷ It follows that *Humanitarian Corridors* are likely to generate a new unbalanced relationship of 'domination and assistance'²⁶⁸ and of 'dependency and obligation'²⁶⁹ between the faith-based organisations and the future asylum seekers. Indeed, the establishment of an equal relationship would require the beneficiaries of help to pay their debt in order to strike a balance.²⁷⁰ But the sentiment of compassion from which *Humanitarian Corridors* stem from cannot be reciprocated; hence, the perpetuation of their position of inferiority.²⁷¹

In summary, being that the relationship between the faith-based organisations and the beneficiaries of *Humanitarian Corridors* is unbalanced, the former finds themselves in a position of power. It could be argued that this power translates into a form of self-legitimation for the organisations to select those who will be able to safely and legally access the potential Country of asylum, namely Italy, according to self-established criteria. Specifically, these include *prima facie* refugees recognised by the 1951 Convention and Protocol; people whose life or freedom is in danger; persons in vulnerable conditions as described in the European Directive 2013/33 of 26 June 2013; and persons with family ties in Italy who, for this reason, declare their will to integrate in Italian society.²⁷² Nevertheless, the sponsoring organisations seem to mainly emphasise the importance of the last two. As underlined by Youssef Atais, a cultural and linguistic mediator operating in Lebanon with the Community of Sant'Egidio: 'the selection criteria depend primarily on vulnerability. But the motivation and willingness to face

²⁶⁶ Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, 12.

²⁶⁷ Barnett, 12.

²⁶⁸ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 3.

²⁶⁹ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 34.

²⁷⁰ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 3.

²⁷¹ Fassin, 3.

²⁷² «Protocollo di intesa per la realizzazione del progetto "apertura di corridoi umanitari"», Art.3; Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale», 13–14.

the challenge of recreating a new life and a better future in a linguistically and culturally different reality must be carefully considered.²⁷³

Before these considerations, the question naturally arises: on what basis are these criteria prioritised? The answer to this question will be discussed below while bearing in mind the answer to the first research question this analysis provided, that is the dual purpose of humanitarian organisations²⁷⁴ discussed above: helping migrants while looking for a means to prove their goodness²⁷⁵ and achieving their own redemption.²⁷⁶ In order to understand the prioritisation of the criteria of vulnerability and potential of integration in the selection process, they will both be analysed in the following.

With regards to the understanding of vulnerability, the Handbook states:

‘[...] Associations and interlocutors [carrying out the selection] identify a list of potential beneficiaries of the operation. These are, above all, particularly fragile people, chosen in consultation with the operators of the Community of Sant’Egidio and with the other associations involved in the project. Single women, children, the elderly, the sick, the disabled, and victims of torture are among the prioritised beneficiaries.’²⁷⁷

The use of the criterion of vulnerability as a means of selection raises some questions. As argued by Carolina Yoko Furusho, ‘the vulnerable migrant is often labelled as such by virtue of association with the characteristics of an ideal victim, such as weakness, frailty and passivity’²⁷⁸, which portrays them as a harmless individual. Moreover, Nils Christie notes that, in order to fit into the category, victims must possess a certain amount of power that allows them to appear ‘strong enough to be listened to’ while at the same time being

²⁷³ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 29.

²⁷⁴ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 26; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 252.

²⁷⁵ Barnett, 26.

²⁷⁶ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 250.

²⁷⁷ Humanitarian Corridors Project, “Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale,” 87.

²⁷⁸ Carolina Yoko Furusho, «The ‘Ideal Migrant Victim’ in Human Rights Courts», 124.

‘weak enough not to become a threat to other important interests’ as it would undermine the ‘public sympathy’ associated with being a victim.²⁷⁹ Therefore, an ideal victim must show a certain degree of strength for their voice to be heard while at the same time remaining weak and harmless not to appear as a threat. In light of such considerations, the beneficiaries of *Humanitarian Corridors* can be considered to fall into the category of ‘ideal victims’. Indeed, they are presented as ‘particularly fragile people’²⁸⁰ that also possess the necessary strength to evoke a sentiment of compassion²⁸¹ in the organisations that take care of the selection. Their being vulnerable individuals not only makes them the perfect beneficiaries of a project created out of compassion but also harmless individuals that would easily meet the need for national security that the governmental actors involved in the project are concerned about. As mentioned above, the importance given to this aspect becomes remarkable in the way this project is often framed. *Humanitarian Corridors* are described by the Italian government as ‘a way of also meeting our need of security’²⁸²; The project, indeed, according to the sponsoring organisations, ‘ensure[s] compliance with internal security and the delicate balance of coexistence’²⁸³ and guarantees ‘security and legality, words that politicians and civil society have frequently invoked in recent years when discussing migration’.²⁸⁴ These statements underline the quite explicit intent of the organisations to comply with the ‘desire for security’ expressed by the Italian government. This is particularly relevant because, following Barnett, new opportunities of humanitarian action for aid agencies are dependent on the states’ belief that the latter can meet their need for security.²⁸⁵ This

²⁷⁹ Nils Christie, «The Ideal Victim», 21.

²⁸⁰ Humanitarian Corridors Project, “Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale,” 87.

²⁸¹ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 250.

²⁸² Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione internazionale, «Humanitarian corridors».

²⁸³ Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale», 73.

²⁸⁴ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 88.

²⁸⁵ Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, 23.

compliance might be true for the project in question as well in which the importance given to the status of vulnerability in the selection process might constitute a means to satisfy the Italian government's demand for security. In turn, this would ensure the organisations a smooth implementation of their project thanks to the government's cooperation in releasing the visas. In this sense, compliance with the Italian government's need for security can arguably be seen as a third reason behind the project's conception.

A second feature that seems to play a crucial part in the selection process is the individual's potential for integration in the future host country and their degree of commitment to the project.²⁸⁶

'We try to understand whether the people in front of us will be able to find their way in Europe' states Youssef Atais.²⁸⁷ This point is particularly stressed during the interviews carried out in the selection process.²⁸⁸ It is very important for the faith-based organisations to know from the very beginning that the beneficiaries of *Humanitarian Corridors* will do their best to culturally, socially and economically integrate into Italian society.²⁸⁹ In this regard, a 'declaration of commitment' has to be signed by the beneficiaries in order to be admitted into the project;²⁹⁰ the declaration is intended to ensure the beneficiaries' full understanding of the project 'with particular reference to the concrete commitments which the signatory beneficiary will have to honour in order to successfully complete the integration process: learning the language of the host country and the obligation to achieve [their own] independence and that of [their] family within the time limits set by the project.'²⁹¹

²⁸⁶ Humanitarian Corridors Project, "Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale," 16.

²⁸⁷ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 29.

²⁸⁸ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 29.

²⁸⁹ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 14.

²⁹⁰ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 25.

²⁹¹ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 25.

However, such criteria might deem people with family ties outside of Italy as ineligible for the project in fear that they would not complete their integration process in Italy and might, for example, try and move to another European country. This point emerged in the informative interview held with Cesare Zucconi, Secretary General of the Sant'Egidio Community, who stressed on the importance to avoid the possibility of the beneficiaries' secondary movements:

'there is the aspect of the desire to move to other European Countries, the so called "secondary movements", which we seek to avoid. Who come to Italy must then stay in Italy until when, at least, they are recognised with a refugee status. [...] But for us this is part of the agreement: avoid secondary movements to avoid difficulties. [...] Let's say that this is a topic about which we warn them since the beginning, and also during the interviews; we try to understand if they have relatives in countries other than Italy. If they have relatives in Italy this is surely another plus point [...] but if we understand that they have relatives abroad we try to avoid it, in the sense that this (the secondary movement), obviously, is more likely to occur.'²⁹²

But if the aim of the project is to save lives by the safe and legal transfer of potential asylum seekers, why are their prospects for remaining in Italy so important? Following the same line of thought, are there other reasons behind the prioritisation of vulnerability besides the Italian government's already discussed need for security? Questioning both criteria with the humanitarian organisations' desire of redemption²⁹³ in mind could unveil the reasoning behind their establishment.

As Fassin and Barnett remind in their works, humanitarianism has a twofold objective of doing something for others while also doing something for oneself by trying to prove one's goodness as an individual and achieve redemption.²⁹⁴ In the given case, the faith-based

²⁹² Cesare Zucconi, Interview with Cesare Zucconi, Secretary General Community of Sant'Egidio, secs. 56.00-1.01.46.

²⁹³ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 250–53.

²⁹⁴ Fassin, 252; Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 26.

organisation aids displaced individuals by offering them the opportunity to safely travel to Italy, apply for asylum and eventually start a new life there. Such act of benevolence is carried out by the sponsor organisations respecting the request for security made by its essential partner - the Italian government. Meanwhile, the act of helping the migrants may also be a means to achieve redemption. One could argue that such redemption constitutes what Fassin would call a ‘counter-gift’²⁹⁵. This gift would be “earned” by having a tangible confirmation that the project is successful; in other terms, by the beneficiaries being granted asylum and by their achieved integration. This rationale seems to be the foundation for the establishment of the analysed criteria as they create the conditions for a successful outcome of the project in advance by selecting who is more likely to be granted asylum and who appears to be best suited and/or intentioned to stay in Italy. On the one hand, as regards the vulnerability criterion, Furusho and Timmer make a remarkable point: the state breaching the rights of an applicant considered to be a vulnerable subject is hardly justifiable; the breach will most likely be classified as a human rights violation.²⁹⁶ Therefore the vulnerable condition of the beneficiaries may constitute a higher level of assurance for the faith-based organisations in that they will be granted protection once they arrive in Italy. On the other hand, not selecting individuals that have family ties outside Italy and, for this reason, have more chances to engage in secondary movements gives the organisations a higher certainty that they will most likely settle down in Italy. This is to say that the conditions for *Humanitarian Corridors*’ success might have been already embodied and concealed in the choice of the criteria as they seem to play a “self-legitimising” role for the the sponsoring organisations: the good outcome of the project, which is exemplified for the organisations by the beneficiaries being granted asylum and permanently settling down in Italy,

²⁹⁵ Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 3.

²⁹⁶ A. Timmer, «A Quiet Revolution: Vulnerability in the European Court of Human Rights», 165; Carolina Yoko Furusho, «The ‘Ideal Migrant Victim’ in Human Rights Courts», 126.

can be seen as proof of their act of humanity's success - making them regain faith in their goodness and in moral progress.²⁹⁷

Humanitarian Corridors' outsourcing role

The implementation of a selection establishing who is (and who is not) entitled to get a visa, safely reach Italy and apply for asylum, regardless of the criteria on which it is based, is a practice which raises many questions and should therefore be discussed in the following section. As previously discussed, notwithstanding their status, asylum seekers should be given the same possibility to enter a country in order to file an asylum application;²⁹⁸ by establishing a selection, the faith-based organisations employ the power to decide who is deemed to be worthy and who is denied the opportunity to leave for Italy and apply for asylum. Making a selection of this kind before an asylum application has been filed could easily be interpreted as a way of preventing people from accessing their rights. Indeed, it gives them the power to exercise a practice of *preventive refoulement*²⁹⁹ towards those they exclude from having the chance to legally and safely enter the Italian territory and apply for protection. The concept of *preventive refoulement* was coined by Chiara Marchetti in reference to the practice adopted by the Italian coastguard of preventing potential asylum seekers from reaching the Italian soil where they otherwise would have been able to apply for asylum and benefit from certain rights provided by the Italian Constitution and International law.³⁰⁰ As noted in the works of Elspeth Guild & Didier Bigo and Cecilia Menjivar, the appropriation of the right to select the beneficiaries before departure outside of the national borders thanks to visa regulations and according to specific requirements is a practice of externalisation of borders.³⁰¹ The latter refers

²⁹⁷ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 26.

²⁹⁸ Gregor Noll, "Seeking Asylum at Embassies," 572.

²⁹⁹ Chiara Marchetti, «Expanded Borders: Policies and Practices of Preventive Refoulement in Italy», 161.

³⁰⁰ Marchetti, 161.

³⁰¹ Elspeth Guild e Didier Bigo, «Policing at a Distance: Schengen Visa Policies», 203; Cecilia Menjivar, «Immigration Law Beyond Borders», 357.

to the abovementioned illustrated practice of European Member states to ‘export aspects of border control outside their territory in order to preempt immigration flows, asylum applications and the stay of irregular migrants on EU territory’.³⁰² The selection of beneficiaries taking place in the transit country may in fact be seen as a means to open the Italian borders only to selected individuals that do not constitute a threat to national security. In fact, the final selection of the beneficiaries depends upon the outcome of a long chain of security controls, both in the transit countries and once they reach Italy. The Handbook on the implementation of *Humanitarian Corridors* makes reference to three different checks carried out by competent authorities of the European country of destination (in the given case Italy) including pre-departure photo identification operations³⁰³ as well as an assessment of the judicial situation of the applicant, aiming at ascertaining ‘the absence of criminal records’³⁰⁴; after passing the first two rounds of checks, the individual’s fingerprint can be registered into EURODAC at the Italian Embassy and, after a final confirmation both from Italian and local authorities, a visa will be issued. Nevertheless, the Italian Ministry of the Interior guarantees that security checks are carried out also upon arrival in Italy.³⁰⁵ All these security controls are further proof of the importance given to this aspect by the Italian government, and this relates to what has been previously discussed: the need for the sponsoring organisations to find a way to please its essential partner - the government. While the faith-based organisations can emphasise their economic independence from the government³⁰⁶, they nonetheless need to compromise with it on other levels if they want it to be on their side. And the Italian government’s request is quite clear: security.³⁰⁷ Indeed, as Barnett teaches, national governments only collaborate with

³⁰² Martin Lemberg-Pedersen, «Effective Protection or Effective Combat?», 34.

³⁰³ Humanitarian Corridors Project, «Humanitarian Corridors: implementation procedures for their extension on a European scale», 16.

³⁰⁴ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 26.

³⁰⁵ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 42.

³⁰⁶ Humanitarian Corridors Project, 89.

³⁰⁷ Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione internazionale, «Humanitarian corridors».

humanitarian organisations if their programmes meet the former's need for security.³⁰⁸ The already discussed prioritisation of vulnerable individuals as well as the multiple security controls carried out on those who pass the first selection steps highlights how governmental actors are handing over part of their responsibilities for their externalising purposes to the faith-based organisations; this turns the project into a tool that only allows pre-selected, harmless individuals to get a visa and then apply for asylum in Italy³⁰⁹.

Going back to the aim of this research paper, whose intent was to investigate the reasons leading to the implementation of *Humanitarian Corridors* and the consequences of such reasons on how the project is implemented and run, one can say that based on the above analysis an answer has taken shape. In front of the number of migrants embarking on dangerous journeys to reach Italy and dying on their way, the Italian government's response mainly consists in preventing such flows through outsourcing practices.³¹⁰ Instead, the faith-based organisations sponsoring the project of *Humanitarian Corridors* felt the need to take action to improve the situation in a different way. *Humanitarian Corridors* do indeed stem from a will to help migrants safely reach Italy and spare them sorrow. However, it became clear that the act of helping them also consisted of a way for the organisations to show their good will by proposing a solution, yet their plan was not possible without the collaboration of the Italian authorities who have the institutional power to issue visas and whose main concern was the security aspect of the project. Thus, the project appears to be implemented to satisfy three main purposes: to help potential refugees to safely reach Italy; to prove the organisation's goodness; and to satisfy the Italian government's need for security. However, the project is generally presented as one that solely aims at helping migrants, without mentioning the interests of the

³⁰⁸ Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, 23.

³⁰⁹ Barnett, 32.

³¹⁰ Bill Frelick, Ian Kysel, and Jennifer Podkul, «The Impact of Externalization of Migration Controls on the Rights of Asylum Seekers and Other Migrants», 197.

sponsoring organisations and of the government. What further elicited interest was whether such purposes affected the way the project was conceived and, consequently, its implementation. The analysis suggests that framing the project as purely altruistic legitimises the organisations' power to select the beneficiaries according to criteria that conceal their other goals; indeed, the importance given to *the willingness to integrate* and to *vulnerability* in the selection process unveils their goal to prove that their solution was successful in helping the migrants, thus confirming their own benevolence. These disclosed reasons for *Humanitarian Corridors'* conception are not devoid of consequences. In fact, the search for an acknowledgment of the project's success turns into a selection that includes and excludes potential beneficiaries according to controversial criteria. Moreover, such selection also satisfies the request for security posed by the Italian government, which constitutes an essential partner for the implementation of the project. Its participation in the creation of *Humanitarian Corridors* is dependent on the organisations' and the project's ability to meet its need for security. Therefore, the government's reason for the implementation implementation of *Humanitarian Corridors* eventually transformed the project and the organisations into a tool to implement outsourcing practices. Surprisingly, a project that originally deemed to provide an alternative solution to practices of border externalisation has proved to be another way to implement them, providing help only to carefully selected categories of people.

Final reflections and limitations

All things considered, it is important to draw attention on a few final remarks and note the present thesis' limitations.

In this regard it is worth noting that the chosen theories are built upon more elements that have not been discussed but could be useful in gaining a more thorough comprehension of the case.

Moreover, following Fassin's lead, in this analysis the Christian faith-based organisations have been regarded as equals, neglecting the differentiation between Catholic and Protestant religious movements. However, it could have been interesting to make a significant theological reflection noting that, on one hand, Catholicism envisages salvation through acts of benevolence while, on the other hand, Protestantism does not.³¹¹ This consideration could have highlighted a distinction between the Catholic organisations potentially being interested in achieving redemption through the implementation of the project and the Protestant organisations not being concerned about this goal and instead guided by a pure sentiment of altruism.

It is also important to note that this thesis mainly analyses the pre-departure phase of the project and thus neglects the one that follows the beneficiaries' arrival in Italy. Looking at the case more comprehensively might have revealed additional consequences of humanitarian dynamics and of power relations within the analysed project.

Furthermore, it would have helped investigating to what extent the beneficiaries feel the obligations demanded by the project and its discussed consequences. In this regard, despite its attempt to be critical, the present thesis relates to the recipient of humanitarian intervention in a similar way to the humanitarian actors, whose work is being criticised, as they both lack in giving voice to 'the other': the asylum seeker and their lived experience.³¹² The employment of a different method more reliant on interviews could have included the perspective of the beneficiaries in the study of the project, giving them the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions thus providing a more complete picture of the research topic. Additionally, a focus on interviewing different individuals who contributed to the realisation of the project could have provided material for investigating their awareness of the aforementioned dynamics.

³¹¹ Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, *A History of Christian Doctrine*.

³¹² Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 254–55.

Conclusion and Outlook

The present thesis dealt with a case study whose analysis primarily relied on documents. The case in question is the project of *Humanitarian Corridors*, a private sponsorship programme addressed to potential receivers of international protection that was born from a collaboration between the Italian government and various faith-based organisations. The paper tried to investigate the reasons leading to its realisation and to question whether and, if so, how they influenced the latter. The interest in this topic rises from the observed shortage of studies critically addressing the implementation of the project which instead seem to always and only present it as an example of good practice. The present thesis distances itself from this framing, moves beyond an idealised vision of *Humanitarian Corridors* and analyses the reasons for the project's conception, refusing to settle for the given ones, and their potentially controversial effects. For this reason, a theoretical framework critically engaging with the concept of humanitarianism, of which the project constitutes a practice, has been employed. In particular, the works by Didier Fassin and Michael Barnett on the topic served to unveil the underlying dynamics of the case. Overall, the use of this approach proved useful in showing how the conception and implementation of the project was not only aiming at helping migrants but have also been influenced by the organisations' wish to prove their own good will and by the fundamental partnership with the Italian authorities, in turn demanding security. These three different demands led the organisations to implement selection practices that are not consistent with the stated purposes of the programme. Indeed, the analysis showed how the organisations' need to prove their benevolence affected the choice of the selection criteria, making them, on the one hand, a means with which guarantee the successful outcome of *Humanitarian Corridors* and, on the other hand, a questionable means of exclusion. Moreover, the need for security of the Italian government turns the project into a tool to implement outsourcing practices and admit only few, carefully selected beneficiaries.

In conclusion, the humanitarian field is not an easy one. It demands compromises which do not always come without struggle. It would be superficial to judge the project using the binary notions of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ because the two aspects coexist. In fact the project of *Humanitarian Corridors* undoubtedly stems from the good will to help people in need, and it succeeds in doing so for those who are selected. It provides them a safe and legal journey, by avoiding deaths in the Mediterranean, human smuggling and trafficking; and allows people in vulnerable situations to apply for international protection.³¹³ However, the organisations’ and the government’s needs may not appear self-evident. This thesis tried to understand them and drew attention to their underlying consequences on the project’s implementation in order to provide a constructive critique and put into practice one of Barnett’s lessons:

‘Humanitarianism has made its greatest strides when humanitarians questioned the consequences of their actions, examined the complexity of their motives, fretted over the development of a machinery that might build a stronger wall between themselves and those in need, discovered ways in which those who come to emancipate also bear new mechanisms of domination, and began collecting evidence to understand what does and does not work.’³¹⁴

As reminded by Barnett and Fassin, it is important to be critical towards humanitarian-inspired practices. This thesis adopted this mindset by trying to avoid taking humanitarianism for granted. In this regard, the hope is that this paper will stimulate a critical internal reflection by the sponsoring organisations and will lead them to be more conscious about the implications of their will and actions. Although its case-study nature makes the research findings not generalisable, it can serve as a source of reflection for other humanitarian workers active in the field.

³¹³ Humanitarian Corridors Project, “Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for Their Extension on a European Scale.”

³¹⁴ Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, 239.

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