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MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS IN ITALY: FRAMING REAL AND SYMBOLIC BORDERS

Marco Bruno¹

The “need” to build walls and barriers, restore boundaries, restraining “waves” of refugees and migrants, appears one of the most urgent priorities involving European countries. In Italian media and political debate this theme has been very important in last years also regard a peculiar kind of border, the maritime one, for the centrality acquired by Lampedusa and other coasts, also as symbolic space of construction of relationship with the “Other”. On the other hand, the media defined also “symbolic internal borders”, by focusing on certain themes or images of migrations. The contribution aims to explore and deconstruct the main mechanisms of representation and news-media construction of immigrant image in Italy. Through frame analysis (mostly carried out with qualitative and non-standard methods) will be enlightened three main discursive dimensions: a) the so-called “landing emergency” (as *external* border); b) the central interest on crime news where immigrants are protagonists, and c) the cultural-religious dimension of immigration (both as *internal* border).

Keywords: media representations, migration, frame analysis, journalism, public discourse.

Representations, policies and media-framing

Reflection on media representations of migration can only move from the assumption implied that policies are largely influenced by the public discourse that develops on a certain theme, in terms of agenda building and agenda setting². What is more, even the methods of presentation of social problems in the public arena start with considerations and interests of a political kind. Attention to the media sphere appears so decisive, taking shape as the *field* in which these

¹ “Sapienza” University of Rome. Rome, Italy.

² MC COMBS Maxwell E., SHAW Donald L. *The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media*; BENTIVEGNA, Sara (ed.). *Mediare la realtà. Mass media, sistema politico e opinione pubblica*; MARINI, Rolando. *Mass-media e discussione pubblica*.

discourses are expressed and explained. The reference to the concept of the *field*, as proposed by Bourdieu³, to be read here in a broader sense, by placing the issue of media representations (although present in the same paper by the French sociologist) in a more central position. Similarly, it is, of course, essential to consider the scale of the conflict between different constructions and representations⁴.

The field of media representations (in the case explored here, relating to migratory phenomena) presents itself as a space in which different actors *construct* social problems⁵ and at the same time identify possible solutions, through the definition of policies. This competitive and confrontational aspect regards a symbolic dimension and one that is based on building and strengthening specific discursive frames, for which – as is the case in general for the construction of frames⁶ – a decisive role is played by linguistic, metaphorical or iconic aspects, as well as the selection and hierarchisation of specific issues and sub-issues⁷.

In this sense, the role of media images in the process of “social construction of reality”⁸ is evident along with *negotiation*⁹ meanings and opinions of the world by the public that – interacting with them and bringing in their own convictions – builds social representations of reality¹⁰ or – for the specific field of interest of this paper (and as stated elsewhere¹¹) – *social representations of otherness*.

The “power” of the media is expressed primarily in an agenda power, however the hypothesis corollaries of agenda setting (as well as its evolution) are in some way made more complex by reference to the construction of so-called *social problems*.

³ BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Quelques propriétés des champs*, p. 113-120; see also BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*.

⁴ On this theme, cf., among others, GAMSON, William A. *Talking politics*.

⁵ On “social problems”, among others: COHEN, Stanley, YOUNG, Jock (eds.). *The manufacture of news*; GUSFIELD, Joseph R. *Moral passage: The symbolic process in public designations of deviance*; HALL, Stuart et alii. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*.

⁶ ENTMAN, Robert M. *Framing: toward clarification of a fractured paradigm*; REESE Stephen D., GANDY Oscar H., GRANT August E. (eds.). *Framing public life: perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*; BARISONE Mauro. *Comunicazione e società. Teoria, processi, pratiche del framing*; BRUNO, Marco. *Cornici di realtà. Il frame e l'analisi dell'informazione*.

⁷ This contribution recall some reflections already developed by the author in other texts, for which the references are in final bibliography; in particular, see BRUNO, Marco, LAI, Valeria. *Cronache di “invasioni” e disconoscimenti: sbarchi, migranti e richiedenti asilo nei media italiani, a due anni dall’“emergenza Nord Africa”*; BRUNO, Marco. *The journalistic construction of “Emergenza Lampedusa”: The “Arab Spring” and the “landings” issue in media representation of migration*; BINOTTO, Marco, BRUNO, Marco, LAI, Valeria. *Tracciare confini. L'immigrazione e i media italiani*.

⁸ BERGER, Peter L., LUCKMANN, Thomas. *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*.

⁹ HALL, Stuart. *Encoding and Decoding*; HALL, Stuart (ed.). *Representation, cultural representations and signifying practices*; SILVERSTONE, Roger. *Why study the media?*

¹⁰ FARR, Robert, MOSCOVICI, Serge. *Social Representations*.

¹¹ BRUNO, Marco. *L'islam immaginato. Rappresentazioni e stereotipi nei media italiani*.

The need to build walls and barriers, restore boundaries, retaining “waves” of refugees and migrants, appears one of the most urgent priorities today and discussions involve European countries. But the theme of the border, and more specifically the maritime border, has been one of the dimensions of the entire prevailing representation of the migratory phenomenon in the Italian media, over the last thirty years. In particular, it is around the real and symbolic space of the coasts and islands of Sicily (primarily Lampedusa) that the media discourse on migration in Italy has been built.

On the other hand, the presence of a “symbolic internal border” is constructed by the focus of Italian media on the securitarian problem linked to the migration phenomenon, through the “blown up snapshot” on crime-news issues. A *blown up snapshot* is a photographic caricature, an exaggeration, a change in the shapes and dimensions of a representation to highlight it and to emphasise an aspect of it. This is what happens to the image of immigration, more specifically to security and crime issues. That is the dark side present in every human phenomenon, it is problematic and related to the language of crime, to emotions, to fears of invasion and of degradation.

Then there is another symbolic border, more related to emotional and mental dimension but their conception of their own and others’ cultural identity, which increasingly (and simplistically) is also attributed to a religious dimension. It is for example the case of the presence among immigrants of a Muslim component, with respect to which the suspicion of the Other also feeds on religious stereotypes of immigrants and Islam, also in reference to its presence in the public space.

This contribution aims to explore and deconstruct the mechanisms of representation and news-media construction into three main discursive dimensions: a) the so-called “landing emergency” (an *external* border); b) the central interest on crime news where immigrants are protagonists, and c) the cultural-religious dimension of immigration, as a menace to “our” traditions (both as *internal* border). Through mass-media discourse analysis – mostly carried out with non-standard methods, referred to *frame analysis* and *critical discourse analysis* – we can examine the representative patterns of these “borders”, constructed in a symbolic and discursive way in mainstream media¹².

These patterns are configured as a static image that has been fixed over the past thirty years. The identification and deconstruction of prevalent frames in news representations allows us to highlight the central role of the media in

¹² Even if data and empirical evidence cannot be explored in depth in this article, the reflections presented here came from research lines carried out in recent years by the author and by a network of scholars (in the same Department and in other Italian Universities) gathered around the activities for the “Carta di Roma”, the “Journalist’s professional code of conduct regarding asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants” (www.cartadiroma.org). On this, refer to the relative research reports and publications from these research projects: see the final bibliography.

the definition of the situation and in the construction of immigration in Italy as a “social problem”. The news-frame analysis approach¹³ allows us to point out how visual images, lexical and argumentative constructs, metaphors, etc. are “framing devices”¹⁴ that contribute to establish, structure and enhance the discourse on the Other, not only as a set of messages, but as a dynamic and potentially conflictual (sometimes consensual) field of representations and forces that redirect towards a specific definition and construction of reality.

First border: the landing issue and the invasion frame

The first threat posed by the foreigner is represented by the entry in a socially constructed *territory* and perceived as “ours”. Indeed, in this case *space* is imagined as a *community*, the *nation-as-place*. A metaphor that refers to the size of the space, the presence or absence of boundaries and related controls also of explicitly military type.

In the Italian case attention to this national space is largely made up (of course with regard to the theme of arrivals from the southern hemisphere) by borders that have a certain “immateriality”: the “border” represented by the Mediterranean Sea appears at the same time to be uncontrollable due to its size and for the very fact of being formed by sea. But at the same time it is very “solid” for the risks it poses to those who try to cross it¹⁵. Not surprisingly a significant part of the media narrative about arrivals on the Italian coasts is the narration of shipwrecks and death¹⁶.

This particular physical and symbolic space, only partially lit by the media, refers to a more imaginary than real presence and essentially ignores the actual numerical strength of these entries. It is no coincidence that the public image of this risk is embodied in a figure like that of the “clandestine” as it is no coincidence that the boundaries of this invasion are established and staged by the national media, especially on television. The symbolic space set up by these media is added to that legal one made up of the borders¹⁷: then the policing apparatus of border surveillance is added to that of information consisting of the “front line” made up of the news of landings¹⁸.

This is an interesting paradox inherent in the narrative of arrivals by sea: what remains “clandestine” for the police services, is instead perfectly identifiable for the apparatus of media observation. “Anyone who has no identity documents

¹³ ENTMAN, *op. cit.*; BRUNO, *Cornici di realtà...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ GAMSON, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ In only the period from January 1st to November 9th, 2015 the number of deaths in the Mediterranean are 3,423; according to IOM (International Organisation for Migration) estimates there are at least 30 thousand migrants and refugees who over the past fifteen years, from 2000 to 2015, lost their lives trying to reach Europe.

¹⁶ BRUNO, LAI, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ BINOTTO, Marco. *Confini. Metafore, frame e spazi nella definizione del nemico.*

¹⁸ AMBROSINI, Maurizio. *Richiesti e respinti. L'immigrazione in Italia. Come e perché*, p. 99-101.

provides excellent images for the media coverage of the events. Immigration thus becomes visible when it is legally invisible, deviant"¹⁹. We are thus in the presence of an authentic distortion of the view, where irregular (unlawful) migration flows take on a high profile and media consistency, where statistically, instead, the arrival takes place predominantly in a widespread way through legal entries that only later fall into irregularity (unlawfulness). On the contrary, in public perception immigration takes on this desperate, chaotic and ungovernable image²⁰.

The entire information apparatus brought to play – and particularly in its visual component – confirms this metaphorical key of reading: from images that portray boats full of people that dock at a quay to maps depicting flows reaching and going beyond national borders. Indeed, within the more general coverage of the migratory phenomenon, the landings theme is in some ways an emblematic aspect and – as we have pointed out elsewhere²¹ – we would say almost “iconic”, thanks to its ability to summarise the many dimensions of the entire *discourse* on migration. From the point of view of the production and re-production of meanings, this image becomes the synthesis of a variety of issues with highly stereotyped, lexical-textual formulas with few and repetitive visual sequences²². Although all available data show that only a very small number of the entries in Italy, even irregular (unlawful), follow the route of arrival by sea, the image of migrants just landed on the coasts of southern Italy, and of rescuers and law enforcement officers intent on feeding them, not only sums up in an almost didactic way a set of practices representative of immigration, but sometimes it seems almost to exhaust the phenomenon discursively, providing a highly repetitive and recognisable set of images and content.

The same frame emerges at the level more strictly of content and terminology. “Lampedusa: still an emergency”, “Alarm on immigrants, the invasion has restarted”, “Lampedusa, the days of the exodus”, “Immigrants: record landing”, “An assault that our country cannot stop”, “The Great invasion has begun”²³. In all these headlines it clearly emerges that the theme of arrival and, by extension, the entire media image of migration are articulated in public discourse through the frame of “conquest” (by the “invaders”) and “defence” (that is down to the autochthons) of a territory; it is a conception of socio-geographical space in

¹⁹ BINOTTO, *Confini...*, *op. cit.*

²⁰ *Ibidem.*

²¹ BRUNO, Marco. “L’ennesimo sbarco di clandestini”. *La tematica dell’arrivo nella comunicazione italiana*, p. 95.

²² On this theme see also LAURANO, Patrizia. *Arrivi, sbarchi, rimpatrio*. On the “iconic” strength of certain media images, cf. MARLETTI, Carlo (ed.). *Televisione e Islam. Immagini e stereotipi dell’Islam nella comunicazione italiana*, p. 100-102; cf. also BRUNO, *L’Islam immaginato...*, *op. cit.*

²³ These headlines are shown in a literal way just as they appear within the media contents analysed and obviously make up only a very small part of those recorded during the various research experiences. For more details, see BRUNO, LAI, *op. cit.*

which cohabitation or integration is not yet concerned, but, even before that, the very legitimacy of the presence of otherness in a space perceived and defined as “ours”. This “territorial” dimension refers to a conception that is still clearly one of emergency and pathological of migration flows (we could say pre-modern), as if in public discourse and in Italian society reality was not yet internalised – for more than thirty years now²⁴ – of no longer being a starting place but a landing place for migration projects.

Above all these images (or chains, image sequences) can be directly linked to the corresponding political discourses that insist on the conception of a besieged space, of flows to be stemmed and governed. Thus the emergency administrative management has its reference media discourse, in which the visual dimension is predominant, exactly iconic. So, very often the photographic image (but the same goes for the television one) is used as a form of framing which confirms and reinforces the interpretative key chosen²⁵ in concrete making the use of peculiarly chosen images with the logic of journalistic information indistinguishable from those related to purposes mainly of political communication. Indeed, this representative and metaphorical apparatus not only recalls certain specific illustrative choices, but also a recurring language that corresponds to just as many political and administrative solutions²⁶.

Second border: the immigrant as a security threat

The border in any case “physical” of national space broken by the arrival of migrants becomes essentially a symbolic border when you trace a difference and mistrust through the social construction of fear and crime as the main way of seeing the presence of foreigners in Italy. Palidda explains the *criminalisation of foreigners* as a set of “discourses, facts and practices made by the police, judicial authorities, but also local governments, media, and a part of the population that hold immigrants/aliens responsible for a large share of criminal offences”²⁷.

The flattening in the news, and more specifically regarding crime, of information concerning foreigners is an aspect well documented by numerous studies and is also one of the constants of the representation of the immigrant in different international media systems²⁸. With respect to the Italian case it appears

²⁴ COLOMBO, Asher, SCIORTINO, Giuseppe (eds.). *Stranieri in Italia. Trent'anni dopo*.

²⁵ POGLIANO, Andrea. *Nominare mostrando. L'influenza della visibilità sul racconto giornalistico dell'immigrazione*; POGLIANO, Andrea. *Framing Migration: News Images and (Meta-) Communicative Messages*; GARIGLIO, Luigi, POGLIANO, Andrea, ZANINI, Riccardo (eds.). *Facce da straniero: 30 anni di fotografia e giornalismo sull'immigrazione in Italia*; HALL, Stuart. *The Determination of News Photographs*.

²⁶ MANERI, Marcello. *I media e la guerra alle migrazioni*, p. 83-85.

²⁷ PALIDDA, Salvatore. *A review of the principal European countries*, p. 23.

²⁸ Updated and documented reviews can be found in BINOTTO, Marco. *La “signora in nero”: non c'è immigrazione senza cronaca* and BINOTTO, BRUNO, LAI (eds.), *op. cit.*

almost superfluous to provide further empirical evidence of that “crushing”; this is a mono-dimensionality and a social alarm that relies on discursive practices that are based on the “tautology of fear”²⁹ and “black blow up”³⁰ of the media image of the foreigner. A set of representations further fuelled by the politicisation of the entire discourse on security and so-called “political entrepreneurs of fear”³¹.

If the spatial metaphor allows easy subdivision of inside/outside, this can then be transformed into the consequent separation between us and them, between friends and enemies. Having entered the criminal then brings something, adding some elements that did not exist previously (crime, violence) and can just as easily be the subject of social stigma and exclusion. The immediacy of this metaphoric image allows an easy journalistic use and the equally simple connection to common sense statements, to frames and knowledge understandable by the public³². A mixture of erudite references and conventional images that can combine the infographic, the photographic image and the editorial of the university professor almost seamlessly³³.

The definition and media elaboration of the safety issue is a peculiar case of construction of social problems: it presupposes a common symbolic horizon, a set of practices and culturally transmitted norms, an idea of “normality” and order and a group that identifies a certain circumstance or a specific event as negative or otherwise able to threaten or impair a situation of context perceived as “natural” and of *social order*³⁴. The definition of social problems (and this is even more significant in the so-called society of “uncertainty” and “risk”) is therefore a process firmly anchored in value systems, collective identity and shared norms. The media therefore play an ideological function of social control, affirming and reaffirming the norm and defining behaviour or any person who appears to disrupt social order presented *in itself* as desirable as deviant: the focus on individual events and “front-page” cases, or the use of statistical data on crime become fundamental for the construction of consensus for exceptional and emergency measures³⁵ or, as seen above, of symbolic “defence” of “our”

²⁹ DAL LAGO, Alessandro. *Non Persone. L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*, p. 73-75.

³⁰ BINOTTO, Marco, BRUNO, Marco, LAI, Valeria (eds.). *Gigantografie in nero. Ricerca su sicurezza, immigrazione e asilo nei media italiani*.

³¹ One cannot delve into the theme of political and “ideological” accentuation of the security issue for electoral purposes in Italy here since it would require much more argumentation. In recent years these have been embodied by centre-right governments, and above all by the “Lega Nord” (Northern League), even though the forces of the centre-left, especially in some situations, have not been strangers to such a drift.

³² JALBERT, Paul L. (ed.). *Media studies: ethnomethodological approaches*; CANIGLIA, Enrico. *La notizia. Come si racconta il mondo in cui viviamo*.

³³ BINOTTO, *Confini...*, *op. cit.*

³⁴ BINOTTO, Marco. *Dentro la cittadella*.

³⁵ ALTHEIDE, David L. *Creating fear: news and the construction of crisis*.

space represented as being under siege³⁶. What seems significant here is that these dynamics make concrete and almost plastically represented the inability of the media of comprehension and restitution of any social change in the medium and long term, and (albeit indirectly) the support and reproduction of irrational attitudes and securitarian “obsessions”³⁷.

Third border: the threat to western culture and the religious frame

The bellicose vocabulary so characteristic of the coverage of arrivals finds perfect understanding within this metaphor, in this way of illustrating *the movement between spaces*.

As Georg Simmel³⁸ noted, *the foreigner* appears the perfect embodiment of this situation of ambiguity, so immigration can be transformed into a new kind of worry. That is the fear of losing identity, a neo-racism, “cultural” and “differentialist”³⁹, which fears the contact between the traditions and norms, the risk of “mixing of cultures”. With respect to the cultural exchange, or rather to its media version, public discourse often slips on the so-called religions of the immigrants and implicitly (although the data shows much more complex dynamics) on Islam, even as a symbol of the “problem” of cultural exchange with otherness.

In fact, in Italy among immigrants Muslims add up to about one-third, and the religious differentiation due to new entries operates above all within a differentiation of the Christian component: just think of the migration from Eastern Europe, mostly Orthodox. Indeed we are witnessing the paradox that, if in the media discourse of reasoning on the religious affiliation of the “new Italians” essentially means speaking of Islam, if we look at the statistics we can see an increase in the “stock” of Muslims in Italy but a substantial stability in terms relative to percentages, seeing that among the immigrants (and among the new entries) the majority are “non-Muslims”⁴⁰.

³⁶ On the recent quantitative and qualitative “explosion” of crime news in Italian media, cf. among others the research of the Observatory of Pavia (OSSERVATORIO EUROPEO SULLA SICUREZZA. *L'insicurezza sociale ed economica*, and ff.); cf. also the work of Morcellini (*IDEM. Il nero della cronaca nera. Il crimine efferato nella lente dei media*) and Cerase (*IDEM. Colpevoli per elezione: gli immigrati nella lente della cronaca nera*).

³⁷ DAL LAGO, *op. cit.*

³⁸ SIMMEL, Georg. *Excurs über den Fremden*.

³⁹ TAGUIEFF, Pierre-André. *Le racisme*.

⁴⁰ According to various estimates, the Muslims in Italy are between 1,300,000 and 1,500,000, only a third of the new arrivals come from the Maghreb or South Asian countries, from countries with a Muslim majority (at least theoretically). The discourse is obviously more complex than one can describe in this space. It should be considered, for example, the considerable problem of “attribution” in terms of *estimation* of religious affiliation with reference to the country of origin, because as we know religious affiliation is not recordable strictly in terms of personal details. As well as the simple fact that one assumes virtually all people as however belonging to at least one religion (obviously underestimating atheists, agnostics, non-believers, etc.).

Even if we wish to assume that the most interesting question is the “Islamic” dimension of the foreign presence, it does not in fact focus so much on some complex issues but undoubtedly significant for the Italian case: just think of the relations between the state and organised and expressions of a Muslim “religious figure”⁴¹, the theme of inter-religious exchange or of the secular nature of the Italian institutions, such as educational ones, etc. Much of the debate has focused on some sensitive and very divisive issues, often articulated in very stereotypical terms: the construction of mosques⁴², the veil, the role and rights of women⁴³, and of course the security issues arising from the threat of Jihadist terrorism, inevitably reconnected – through mechanisms of simplification and criminalisation – with the wider Muslim presence in Italy where, as we know, the moderate component makes up a large majority. Within a substantial and well documented inability of the media to “read” the complexity of this cultural and religious universe⁴⁴, the representations of the immigrant as a bearer of Islamic religious differences are articulated around a few stereotyped elements. Thus, it is primarily the frame of the enemy and the threat that drives the image of the immigrant of Muslim origin, through suspicion of fundamentalism, just as there remain distorted representations already widely reported in the literature. The monolithic nature of the Islamic religious system, an almost innate bigotry and an ahistorical and immutable image of Muslim societies are just some of the most obvious elements of this complex of distortions. Compared to the news that gets most visibility⁴⁵, one points out the topic of the building of mosques in some Italian cities and their relative conflicts⁴⁶ and problems of intercultural “coexistence”, again declined in terms of archaism *versus* a supposed Western cultural superiority: this is the case for example of individual cases in the news where religious fanaticism dominates, or of the veil issue: both aspects in which the media representation focuses its interest on the status of women, however it seems to arduously go along the hard ridge between an “objective” description of situations in their own way complex and the tendency, always lurking, to fall into stereotypical images about Islam.

The symbolic border of us/them, feeds itself in this case on an illusory cultural superiority and, an aspect that is probably even more serious, it seems to use just the status of women instrumentally (on which even the so-called Western

⁴¹ GRITTI, Roberto. *La politica del sacro*; LAURANO, Patrizia. *La questione dell'intesa*.

⁴² ALLIEVI, Stefano. *La guerra delle moschee. L'Europa e la sfida del pluralismo religioso*; BOMBARDIERI, Maria. *Moschee d'Italia. Il diritto al culto. Il dibattito sociale e politico*.

⁴³ BRUNO, Marco. *Istantanee di un islam globale. Materiali per una sociologia dell'islam in Europa, tra identità e rappresentazioni*.

⁴⁴ See, among others BRUNO, *L'islam immaginato...*, op. cit. See also MARLETTI, Carlo (ed.). *Televisione e Islam. Immagini e stereotipi dell'Islam nella comunicazione italiana*.

⁴⁵ BRUNO, Marco, PORRO Eugenia. *Minoranze religiose*.

⁴⁶ On this theme, cf. ALLIEVI, Stefano (ed.). *Conflicts over Mosques in Europe. Policy Issues and Trends*.

society still has a lot of work to do, just think of “womencide”, or of economic and workplace disparities, etc.) as “territory” of contention where the same full subjectivity of women remains in the background.

Some (open) conclusions on media-construction of immigration as a social problem

The political-media construction of “prominent” issues and that normally “need” legislative intervention, is a key to understanding how the communication system succeeds, in dealing with migration, in affecting the political agenda and the views of citizens. One said: “political-media construction”. The reference to a “constructionist” terminology obviously needs to be motivated and this is possible by noting how in selecting and ordering news there are far from negligible doses of artificiality and arbitrariness. Speaking of arbitrariness, however, is quite another thing to stating a coincidence or a complete indeterminacy. If you systematically analyse media practice and content, there is clearly the ability to break away from the “objective”⁴⁷ concept of newsworthiness (why does a fact becomes news?), through casual exercise of its power of *gatekeeping*; just as the needs are clear for a policy concerned with finding from time to time new questions to be put on the agenda. *Social problems* are constructed then by highlighting and linking different events⁴⁸ to each other, articulating the “game” of the different political positions, and discursively practicing a closed search of possible causes, explanations and finally solutions (also articulated in terms of new measures to be taken, laws to change, penalties to toughen, etc.).

There is a difficulty in narrating and dominating socio-cultural change and this difficulty also concerns the media: the stubborn centrality of news regarding the crimes of the immigrants appears both as a mechanism of anticipatory social control towards immigrants and as a form of symbolic displacement, an attempt to shift the axis of the discussion from the strenuous conflict-integration dialectic to that, in many ways much more reassuring of the Other-as-a threat.

⁴⁷ It is widely accepted that in any case it is not possible to discuss the “objectivity” of the criteria of newsworthiness, even those so-called *substantial*, i.e. referred to the fact itself and its features of importance and salience. The theme itself is vast, even for the connection with the contributions made by the sociological study of the journalistic profession and studies on news-making, organisational, and production routine practices. On this issue Wolf’s review (*IDEM. Teorie delle comunicazioni di massa*) remains unmatched. For further details and an effective synthesis of these themes, see among others, ALTHEIDE, David L. *Creating reality. How tv news distorts events*; TUCHMAN, Gaye. *Making news: a study in the construction of reality*; ALTHEIDE, David L., SNOW Robert P. *Media logic*.

⁴⁸ For a “clarification” of this link between single events and creation of a relative “social problem”, applied to the theme of *landings*, cf. BRUNO, Marco. *Lampedusa/Italia. La costruzione giornalistica dell’“emergenza” e la politica televisiva dei numeri*.

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Resumo

Representações midiáticas dos imigrantes na Itália: framing real e fronteiras simbólicas

A “necessidade” de construir muros e barreiras, restaurar fronteiras, restringindo as “ondas” de refugiados e migrantes, parece ser uma das prioridades mais urgentes de vários países europeus. Nos meios de comunicação e no debate político da Itália este tema tem sido muito importante nos últimos anos, tanto em relação a um tipo peculiar de fronteira, a marítima, devido à centralidade adquirida por Lampedusa e outras costas, quanto em relação ao espaço simbólico da construção relacional com o “outro”. Ao mesmo tempo, os meios de comunicação também tem tratado sobre “fronteiras internas simbólicas”, enfatizando determinados temas ou imagens das migrações. Esta contribuição tem como objetivo explorar e desconstruir os principais mecanismos de representação e de construção midiática da imagem dos imigrantes na Itália. Através de uma análise de estrutura (em grande parte realizada com métodos qualitativos e não tradicionais) serão tratadas três principais dimensões discursivas: a) o assim chamado “pouso de emergência” (como fronteira externa); b) o interesse central nas notícias de crimes onde os imigrantes são protagonistas, e c) a dimensão cultural-religiosa da imigração (ambas como fronteiras internas).

Palavras-chave: representações midiáticas, migração, análise do frame, jornalismo, discurso público.

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