



## Diasporic and mainstream media as a tool for intercultural integration?

### The case of Latin-American communities in Italy

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#### Abstracts

The Author examines the role of diasporic media in Italy and their impact on the dynamics of integration of migrants, with the objective of offering a complementary perspective to the existent research which has been mainly focused on the mainstream media. It thus explores the proneness of both mainstream and diasporic media towards the propagation of the notion of (intercultural) integration. The Author aims at interpreting the implications of “both” mainstream and diasporic media production and consumption in the integration process of Latin-American communities in Italy.

**Keywords:** diasporic media, mainstream media, intercultural integration, latin-americans, Italy

La Autora analiza el papel de los medios de comunicación multicultural en Italia y su impacto sobre la dinámica de integración de los inmigrantes, con el objetivo de ofrecer una perspectiva complementaria a las investigaciones previas que se han basado principalmente en los medios de comunicación. Explora, pues, las perspectivas de ambos: los de la amplia difusión y los de los multiculturales, así como su propensión a transmitir mensajes cargados de una noción de integración (intercultural). Trata de interpretar, en particular, las implicaciones de la producción y del consumo de medios de comunicación en el proceso de integración de los latinoamericanos en Italia.

**Palabras clave:** media multiculturales, medios de comunicación, la integración cultural, latino-americanos, Italia

L'Autrice analizza il ruolo dei media multiculturali in Italia e il loro impatto sulle dinamiche di integrazione degli immigrati con l'obiettivo di offrire una prospettiva complementare alle precedenti ricerche che si sono basate principalmente sui media a larga diffusione. Esplora quindi le prospettive di entrambi i media: quelli a larga diffusione e quelli multiculturali così come la loro rispettiva propensione a veicolare messaggi carichi della nozione di integrazione (interculturale). L'Autrice mira a interpretare, in particolare, le implicazioni della produzione e del consumo dei media nel processo di integrazione dei latinoamericani in Italia.

**Parole chiave:** media multiculturali, media a larga diffusione, integrazione interculturale, latinoamericani, Italia

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## 1. Immigration, integration and media

Immigration has an important cultural, social and economic impact in today's societies, especially in urban areas (Koser, 2007; Amato, 2008). The presence of immigrants, though, is seldom acknowledged for its social significance and cultural and economic contribution (Beck, 2003; Georgiou, 2006). In Italy, immigrants are a structural part of the labour market, their economic net contributions reach 96 billion euros in what represents a contribution of up to 8.8% of the total net wealth (Fondazione Leone Moressa, 2016). Mainstream media seldom highlight such essential aspects of immigration (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004; Pugliese, 2014). Contents featuring immigrants typically do not exercise priority over mainstream media's agenda setting, except when to highlight a scenario emergency, securitization or humanitarian crisis (Meli, 2014, 2015; Vivanco, 2014; Caviedes, 2015).

Therefore, bearing the assumption that intercultural dialogue is optimal and desirable, in which capacity can contents conveyed by media result in greater interaction between immigrants and the host society or simply allow for a more objective knowledge of one another? Is there space in Italian mainstream media for a story telling of immigration that concedes both visibility and an unbiased account of immigrants and minorities' daily lives? At the same time, can diasporic media provide space, not only for the justified desire of an immigrant community to bond with its past and traditions (Georgiou, 2006; Maneri, 2007; Bailey, Georgiou and Harindranath, 2007), while simultaneously promoting knowledge about events affecting host society? Can diasporic media go further beyond its usual service information provider capacity to guide newcomers and old immigrants (Forlenza, 2016) and actually engage in a dialogue where issues that relate to host society at large are covered too?

In Italy, research on the phenomenon of immigration and its communication implications has traditionally been done through the prism of mainstream media production (Binotto and Martino, 2004; Sredanovic and Zenuni, 2014; Meli, 2015; Sredanovic and Farina, 2015). Diasporic media provides, hence, not only an alternative, but rather a complementary reading of the immigration phenomenon by



placing its main actors (immigrants) at the centre of the analysis, capturing directly their voice, experiences and feelings towards life in the host society.

What we know of society, the way we interpret a given phenomenon such as that of immigration is mostly absorbed through media (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004). Bearing such premise as background, this paper discusses some of the possible theoretical approaches to the impact of mainstream and diasporic media among immigrants and in their adaptation/integration process to the host society.

## **2. Interculturalism. A challenging quest for balance**

Assessing communication dynamics for and about immigrants, drawing on the assumption of intercultural dialogue as an ideal, asks for an understanding of the actual intellectual foundations and meanings of interculturalism. Theory, philosophy, policy or ultimately an orientation: whatever form the latter may assume, it has, for the past decades, been almost exclusively debated in fierce opposition to multiculturalism. It is imperative however to start by acknowledging, despite numerous differences and the last decade's backlash against multiculturalism, that interculturalism «builds upon the foundations of multiculturalism» (Barrett, 2013<sup>a</sup>). Ever since, several cross-Atlantic reflections and experiences have been dedicated to interculturalism (Bouchard, 2011; Barrett, 2013<sup>a</sup>). The use of the concept has been residual in Italy by way of academic development and political discourse, with the exception of research done mainly on the pedagogic field (Santelli, 2003; Castiglioni, 2005; Santerini, 2010). The “cautious” use of the concept (Bouchard, 2011: 11) in Italy and France comes to mind when Bouchard reflects on «significant disparities between the ethnocultural reality of a nation and the general imaginary scheme through which it (the nation) thinks of itself» in what he later defines as «imaginary majorities» (*Ibidem*: 14). Such an imaginary majority could, in fact, find echo in the historical context of Italy, whereby the construction of a fragile notion of national unity has been reached a little over 150 years ago (Cospe, 2002; Colombo and Sciortino, 2004).

Interculturalism has been given influential political endorsement by both the Council of Europe, with the release of its *White Paper on*



*Intercultural Dialogue in 2008* and the Unesco<sup>1</sup>, not surprisingly, these two supra-national entities have little executive powers, hinting at a gap on the actual pragmatic application of interculturalism policies around the world.

Drawing on the literature review of different approaches to interculturalism by some of its major European and North-American theorizers (Bouchard, 2011; Barrett, 2013<sup>b</sup>), it is assumed that in a diverse society<sup>2</sup>, officially there is no cultural majority, however, numerical duality is taken as a given. That is not to say that interculturalism either created or promotes duality, rather it acknowledges it as a state of play. It implies therefore the acceptance of a majority/minority and subsequent tensions associated to it. However, in Bouchard's view (2011: 9): «us versus them does not represent a cleavage but rather a departure point».

In fact, one of the criticisms regarding the conceptualization of interculturalism builds precisely on its dualism acknowledgement, an arguably rigid notion of distinctions oblivious to the fact that in today's liquid society (Bauman, 2007) there are no separate and clearly identifiable groups (Beck, 2003; Barrett, 2013<sup>a</sup>) and that both majority and minorities are composed of a myriad of heterogeneities. Thus, in such duality some will see too many concessions, others too little in a "naïve" quest for incompatible aspirations that will not be achievable as long as positions of power and social inequality remain in *status quo*. It is argued against interculturalism that *ad hoc* concessions risk eventually going too far (Bouchard, 2011). The same way, some States' policies are accused of asking for integration from "one side only" (that of immigrants and minorities) obliging them to abide to unreasonable contracts of integration (Horner and Weber, 2010), something that would ultimately result in a *de facto* advantage for the host society (Bouchard, 2011). Barrett (2013<sup>a</sup>) refuses such criticism arguing that Europe's core values and official stand on intercultural dialogue, through the White Paper itself, act as guardians of the right to heterogeneity. Moreover, duality asymmetries allow for a relation where those in power tend to dictate the rules in detriment of minorities' aspirations.

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<sup>1</sup> Universal declaration of cultural diversity as "world common heritage", 2001.

<sup>2</sup> "Unity within diversity" is one of the core mottos of the European Union.



Another challenging criticism that insofar interculturalism has had very little political application making it harder to assess its potentials when confronted with multiculturalism. Some Authors develop this criticism further defending that the core features of interculturalism are already the core features of multiculturalism (Meer and Modood, 2013).

### 3. Why local matters

Over the past decades, large urban areas in many immigrant receiving countries like Italy have seen the arrival of increasingly diverse groups of newcomers. The city became thus an important meeting point for immigrants (Georgiou, 2006). In my research case, I chose to place Rome and Milan at the centre of the empirical research, drawing on both the cosmopolitan reflections of Beck (2003) and the plea of some scholars (Robbins, 2001) as cited by Georgiou, 2006) calling for a reflection through the city instead of through the nation. In both Rome and Milan live people from around 160 nationalities (Comuni italiani, 2016). Geography is both physical and imaginary in the lives of immigrants, some of its barriers have been overcome with transnationalization of practices. Their use of media – mainly through the advent of social media – allows them to connect to the local, the national and the global creating new forms of belonging in space and mind (Vertovec, 2009) and offering the possibility of omnipresence of both "here" and "there". The media histories of ethnic and immigrant minorities remain however largely unknown.

Thus, borrowing from Beck's reflections (2003, 2011) on cosmopolitanism and recent cross-disciplinary research in urban studies in Italy (Thomasen and Clough-Marinaro, 2014), I also advocate for methods that leave aside monocultural and mononational outlooks because they are out of step with nowadays' urban reality. The local and cosmopolitan dimensions cannot be dissociated nor polarized (Beck, 2003), they are intimately interlinked. Trivial examples of how this happens in society can be found in the *métissage* of food culture, practices and consumption, in a clear evidence of processes that escape a logic of national boundaries. Furthermore, relationships between media production and territory are interlinked with the latter impacting



and framing communication<sup>3</sup> (Lamour, 2013). In her plea for the urge of national media to pay more attention to what is local, communication scholar Catherine Murray (2015: 11), states: «we need a far more effective story on local news from the perspective of international immigrants, permanent residents and their next generation [...]». Moreover, local authorities need to develop innovative ways of reaching out to diverse groups that live within the city (Veronis and Ahmed, 2015). An opportunity to do so is to take advantage of the existence of diasporic media to engage such communities. Ultimately governmental institutions can, through diasporic media increase political participation (Lindgren, 2014). It is worth highlighting that, at times, events that appear invisible to and in mainstream media are advanced ahead, by some diasporic media, who taking the perspective of minorities treat issues with more in-depth. For example, when of the elections for mayor in both Rome and Milan, a Brazilian blogger (Guanais, 2016) displayed service information on immigrants' right to vote (in primary party elections), in a strong sign of diasporic media's readiness to provide for local information that other channels do not seem to manage to get through.

#### **4. Intercultural media integration. Intercultural dialogue through media**

Intercultural dialogue is a practice, but some Authors even deem it a skill (Castiglioni, 2005; Barrett, 2013<sup>b</sup>). A skill that can be promoted through the media. According to the literature, intercultural dialogue is considered to be an ideal type of contact, requiring openness, sensitivity, empathy, and resulting in a deep understanding of one another, albeit any aspect of their background (Castiglioni 2005; Ganesh and Holmes, 2011) as cited by Shuter (2012). It requires communicators to be further aware of any aspect of their own background – even challenge their personal values – that may prevent the understanding of otherness.

Analyzing the field of diasporic media produced in Italy – requires hence new and innovative approaches informed by recent debates privileging interculturalism as new modality of integration as opposed to multiculturalism. The goal of the ongoing research is precisely that

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<sup>3</sup> Free translation from French original.



of testing whether the model of «intercultural media integration» (Geißler and Weber-Menges, 2009) can be used to frame the production reality of national mainstream and Latin-American diasporic media and their audiences in the Italian context.

How can then the principles of interculturalism be put into practice by media? Responsibility for intercultural dialogue is to be shared by public and private institutions, business world, pressure groups, the individuals and the media.

In light of the literature review, intercultural media integration builds upon, among others, two main paradigms: that of integration, understood as an opposite of assimilation and that of a promotion of active acceptance of the necessity of immigration and advocacy for dual citizenship.

The integrative model of media is one in which the local host population and minorities mingle, thus allowing for intercultural communication to take place (Geißler and Weber-Menges, 2009). The Authors also consider that “intercultural integration” does not expect homogeneity but rather mutual knowledge and communication about the differences between the communities (host and newcomers).

Intercultural media integration auspices a proportional participation of minorities in the majority/mainstream media, as well as formulates both the ideal functions of media targeting diasporas and their descendants, by expecting that migrants with knowledge of the host society produce such media in a way that promotes intercultural integration. On its turn, mainstream media, are urged to echoing minorities more frequently and more visibly while promoting adequate coverage to the issues that the immigrant communities face. Geißler and Weber-Menges (2009) line out three specific characteristics to the model, that this research draws on as blueprint to frame the analysis presented later in this paper. Intercultural messages thus have to be assessed in the dimensions of media production, its contents and the use that immigrants as consumers make of it (consumption).

## **5. Representation of immigrants in mainstream media**

Italy counts with over 5 million foreigners alongside its 60 million overall population. Immigrants from different areas of the world have been flocking to the Peninsula since the 1980's. A presence of over three decades



that Amato (2008: 9) ironically evoked as «no alarms, we are simply becoming a multicultural country». Different studies point to patterns repeating themselves over the past decades, in which concerns the representation of immigrants in the Italian mainstream media: 1) in the newspapers a prevalent “criminal”, alarmist (Binotto and Martino, 2004; Colombo and Sciortino; Meli, 2014) and securitization obsessed narrative (Caviedes, 2015) especially when some ethnicities and nationalities are concerned<sup>4</sup>; 2) immigrants as either perpetrators of such crimes or victims of harsh labour conditions (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004; Perrotta, 2008); 3) a TV culture that sends on air shows that help to create fear (Osservatorio Europeo sulla sicurezza, 2013) framed by the dominant political speech of “immigration-insecurity” (Rizzuto and Tirocchi, 2013). The language used to convey contents messages about immigrants and minorities is often used inaccurately (Meli, 2014). In the present case study, ill-use of language also finds empirical evidence in the representation of Latin-Americans, something prone to generate confusion. Often in the same article, the words *Latino*, South-American and the nationality itself are likely to appear interchangeably in reference to the same individual, in what could be labelled an essentialization exercise (Portes, 2005).

Another element, to be taken into account, within a logic of media instrumentalisation by some political factions and even institutions in Italy and elsewhere, is a widespread racism (Andrisani, 2014) and stigmatisation of Islam (Bruno, 2008). Ultimately such practices are facilitated by the internet, its somehow anonymity and numerous social media. A notable case meriting unfortunate attention dates back to the nomination of Cécile Kyenge as Italy’s first black minister (Minister of integration, 2013-2014), who was subject to violent racist insults originating not only in extreme right wing parties but also from institutional exponents and members of the Government/Senate who “walked away” thanks to their political immunity (Luciano and Balsamo, 2013).

Exceptions to a scenario of generalized misrepresentation, include scattered programmes: as for example the weekly *Radici* of Rai3 (TV), «a trip into the immigration world, the regular and silent one» (Rai3, 2015) and *Tg Mediterraneo*, a format co-produced by Rai, France 3 and Rtve covering all Mediterranean countries.

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<sup>4</sup> The present research’s sample of contents, although still in course and not fully accounted for yet, contains dozens of articles linked to Romanian and Albanian petty and serious crimes.



More daring but short-lived mainstream media experiments included *Babel TV* (channel Sky) a rather successful (2,5 million viewers) (Vivanco, 2014) Tv channel entirely dedicated to the world of immigration in Italy, that shut down in 2014. The media titan Sky, inspired by its British peers, broadcasted a few episodes of *Cronache di frontiera*, a documentary that gave voice to the minorities living on the outskirts of Rome «live and without mediators» (SkyTg24, 2015). The four-episode miniseries proved to be successful causing both praise and furor messages on the Sky's social media pages with viewers raging against the programme denouncing its apology of immigration and of being “anti-Italian”. *Real time*, a private entertainment channel also dedicated a miniseries to second generation Chinese in Italy, *Italiani made in China*: starring six youngsters divided between East and West who travel to discover their origins in China. These examples show that there are interesting attempts being made towards an interdialogue taking place, but which remain nevertheless volatile, because of temporary priority on mainstream media's agendas.

## 6. Diasporic media: mapping its presence in Italy

The definition of ethnically targeted media is nuanced and debated. The concept of “diasporic media” is much dependent on a country's history or immigration context. Indeed, its definition differs whether Authors are from North America, Europe or Italy itself (Maneri and Meli, 2007); Murray et al, 2007; Matsaganis *et al.*, 2011; Yu, 2015). In this research paper preference is given to the terminology “diasporic media” understood as media produced “by” and “for” a particular immigrant community and its descendants (second and third generation). Diasporic is here meant in its post-modern asession (Georgiou, 2006, Bailey *et al*, 2007), that is, in a way whereby any mass movement originated by immigration can be considered a diaspora, irrespective of any political or religious grounds for it, two dimensions traditionally linked to the concept of diaspora.

The study of diasporic media in Italy remains, in comparison to the rest of Europe and North-America, rather insipient. Exception is made for a couple of notable pioneer studies conducted with the goal of mapping and quantifying the presence of diasporic media in Italy (Cospe, 2002; Maneri and Meli, 2007). Updated and accurate data on diasporic media's presence, in Italy, however, is residual (Vivanco, 2014). Besides such scenario, comes the fact that the phenomenon of diasporic media production is characterised



by a random lifecycle, admittedly, one of the present research's limitations<sup>5</sup>. Diasporic newspapers, Tv's, websites and blogs flourish as soon/early as they perish. Difficulties in getting access to finance, in the form of subsidies or regional grants determinates, in part, the brevity of some ventures (Maneri and Meli, 2007; Meli, 2014). Several Authors consider that diasporic media can either support and act as a means of integration by giving visibility and participation to minorities on the general public sphere (Maneri and Meli, 2007; Silverstone and Georgiou (2005); Georgiou, 2006; Matsaganis et al., 2011); Meli, 2015), or, on the contrary, according to some academic (Aksoy and Robins, 1998; Srebreny, 2005) as cited by Titley, 2008); and political discourses promote their own "ghettoization" considering the ethnic and minority media as merely «engaged in a hermetic consolidation of cultural identity» (Titley, 2008: 31) or in reference to virtual communities, «at the expense» of their host country's identity. (Croucher, 2011) as cited by Shuter, 2012). Having realized that communication plays a central role in the daily lives of immigrants, the underlying objective of the present research is to decode, through their practices of production and their media choices, the complexity of identity belonging, self-representation and how integration can be negotiated through traditional and web diasporic media. Part of the role of the media of a migrant or minority community consists in the facilitation of networks but also it also essential in acting as a countervailing representation of that same community (Titley, 2008), as opposed to the depiction mainstream media makes of it, often «stereotypical and alienating» (Silverstone and Georgiou, 2005: 434). Diasporic media are powerful in acting as representatives of a certain group, in some cases even support its political and subversive fights (Deschamps, 2002). According to Georgiou, «at the same time they can also become symbols of empowerment and potentially mediate a group's participation in the public sphere of the country where they live, in the public sphere of their country of origin or even in the national and in the transnational public spheres that emerge across boundaries» (Georgiou, 2006: 13).

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<sup>5</sup> The content analysis I was conducting faced the sudden shut down of two online diasporic media which subsequently filed for bankruptcy.



## 7. The Latin-American diasporic media case study

Pragmatic factors such as the proficiency in both Portuguese and Spanish led me to focus the research on Latin-Americans. Understanding the language in which takes place the production of diasporic media being key to an accurate, unbiased research. The great urban centres of Rome and Milan, where, along with Genova a great number of Latin-Americans in Italy live (Ambrosini and Queirolo Palmas, 2005) were at the centre of the analysis of mainstream and diasporic media contents as well as the interviews. Does the local dimension of the lives immigrants lead in the two main Italian cities, find space in mainstream media's narratives? In the same vein to which extent does the local context matter in Latin-American immigrants' media choices?

The Latin-American community in Italy counts with circa 400.000 legally resident inhabitants, representing almost 10% of the total foreign resident population (Istat, 2015). Peruvians, Brazilian and Ecuadorian are among the most represented Latin-American nationalities in Italy. The community's long term presence follows a steady flow of arrivals dating back to the late 1990's. Even though considered as "well-integrated" minorities (*Expreso latino*, 2012), they face, like any other immigrant community, the challenges of adaptation and settlement into a new country in the shape of difficulties in accessing the job market, obtaining residence permits and facilitation in the family reunion process. Moreover, Latin-American immigration to Italy cannot be fully understood without bearing in mind the structural predominance of feminine migrants, often separated from their children (Liberona and Pagnotta, 2012). To such ordeal can be added the extreme distance of their countries of origin to which they seldom return to on visit and which is cause for emotional distress (Ambrosini and Queirolo Palmas, 2005). It is also to be noted that a single Latin-American reality does not exist nor are there linear immigration circumstances and push factors in their choice of coming to Italy. Various *Authors* suggest hence caution when speaking of "latinos" as a whole (Ambrosini and Queirolo Palmas, 2005; Portes, 2005), for their social background and immigration patterns differ substantially from country to country. As Bertaccini (2011) defends, one would more wisely speak of a myriad of different Latin-Americas and subsequently of how each country's respective scenarios might have impacted on



individual immigration paths. A push factor that remains a common denominator to the whole of Latin-America, can however be traced down: violence. Often neglected by governments and their respective immigration policies but ever present, it lures in people's daily lives people both in the Central and South American sub-continent. A fact which is also corroborated by the individual accounts, as collected during the interviews conducted so far. Violence appears, furthermore, to have become part of some of the imaginary and prejudice that Latin-Americans in Italy face, i.e. their association with criminal baby gangs, whose examples abound in the mainstream media (*La Repubblica*, 2016; Leggo, 2016). It is also imperative to highlight the element *jus sanguinis*, the law in force in Italy – albeit last years' multiple debates around it – that does not allow children of foreign parents born in Italy to acquire citizenship until they turn 18 years old. This represents a traumatic factor especially for second generation immigrants who feel deprived of some opportunities offered to Italian born peers and who live through logistic ordeals until they are of legal age. Many among the above features of tension are, in fact, visible from the media analysis that was conducted.

## **8. Methodology**

### *8. 1. Data collection by means of media monitoring: content analysis*

One of the hypothesis of this study is that both mainstream and diasporic media can contribute to the integration process of immigrants. This research project looks into the trends in representation of immigrants in the Italian national mainstream media, and those of Latin-American communities in particular. Drawing on both the model of intercultural media integration developed by Geißler and Weber-Menges (2009) and that of diasporic media as social capital (Fleras, 2009; 2015), this research project attempts at analysing whether intercultural dialogue is in course in both the Italian mainstream media and diasporic media landscape, in this instance the Latin-American.

Through the analysis of Italian mainstream media content, this research looks into how messages conveyed in both media outlets may or may not reflect intercultural dialogue efforts. In parallel, the research includes in-depth analysis of contents originating in Latin-American media produced



locally (diasporic media) and semi-structured interviews with Latin-Americans resident in Italy. For the sake of analysis, it is considered that messages conveying the notion of intercultural dialogue can be understood as including some of these multiple features: visibility offered to immigrant communities, political and economic participation as well as opportunities for self and counter representation of the immigrants' narratives. The focus of my research and this specific paper is on Italian mainstream media with a regional focus: Rome and Milan, two urban centres with high concentration of Latin-Americans (Idos, 2014). In Cospe's (2002) seminal work, a notable finding emerges: that the existent Italian media system is characterised by: a) a weak presence of the local dimension; b) little priority given to service information. The *Authors* describe such editorial preferences as a "sacrifice" of local information, made for the sake of the construction of a unified political national identity. Surprisingly, they argue further, even local press was unable to grasp the citizens' immediate demands and failed in representing them, with consequences also for the immigrant communities. For the present research's project of analysis of mainstream media, the following elements were taken into consideration:

a) presence of (resident and stable) immigration topics: how immigrants are depicted what space do they occupy in the news (in particular, Latin-Americans). I deliberately excluded of my analysis any content directly or indirectly related to the Mediterranean refugee crisis. Also, in what was not always a clear-cut distinction, contents involving minorities with Italian nationality (i.e.: The Jewish, the Roma<sup>6</sup>) were also left out;

b) attempt to capture contents relating to Latin-American countries in the agenda of mainstream media, in a logic of mutual knowledge making part of intercultural dialogue.

As the media monitoring phase of this research project is still in course, contents are still to be further screened both quantitatively and qualitatively. A breakdown by topic (i.e.: sports; business, food, entertainment, security/crime, politics, cultural diversity, facts of culture and society) is still to be applied to the whole recollection of contents. In total, so far 298 content units were analysed.

All the media selected for analysis were monitored during a five-day week (weekends excluded). The content analysis that is still ongoing, for

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<sup>6</sup> Almost half of the total Roma population Italy, has Italian citizenship, from media accounts it is impossible whether they are talking about Italian Roma or Eastern European Roma.



both mainstream and diasporic contents foresees a duration of six months. The analysis kicked off on the second week of January, 2016. The choice of the first semester of 2016 was not random as it coincided with the political campaign of the run for mayor in both Milan and Rome. One of the underlying goals of the analysis was, hence, also an attempt to establish a link between the impact immigration on local politics and contrariwise.

### 8. 2. Mainstream media, rationale for selection

Six national mainstream media, with regional focus were selected: 1) the Lazio and 2) Lombardia Tv regional daily evening news (*Telegiornale*) broadcast by Rai (state owned); 3) the newspaper *Il Messaggero* (printed edition), one of the most widespread in the city of Rome; 4) the online edition of *Corriere della sera*, Milano; the 5) Rome and 6) Milan printed editions of the free daily *Leggo*. Both the Tv channel Rai and the two paid for newspapers selected (*Il Messaggero* and *Corriere della sera*) can be considered as following a neutral editorial line. I deliberately left out of my analysis newspapers and Tv broadcasts that are more politicized<sup>7</sup> (Pagliaro, 2015; Scalfari, 2016), even though in Italy such distinctions should be used “cautiously”. Where possible I tried to use the printed edition of each newspaper. The underpinning logic considering that printed editions reach a more heterogeneous audience and that contrariwise online editions require a higher acquaintance with the use the internet, a trend that although increasing does not reach but 5% of the total newspaper readership in Italy (Audipress, 2015). A printed edition of the *Corriere della sera*, Milano edition, was however not possible, because physically residing in Rome the only way of accessing it was online. As for the free dailies the logic underpinning such choice was again that of a heterogeneous audience. Moreover, it could be assumed that free dailies cover for a larger “readership”<sup>8</sup>, not necessarily interested «anymore by the paid press» (Lamour, 2016: 831). Their very short, commercial and uniformed contents, should however be read under the lenses of a «common urban culture structured mainly by mass

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of politicized newspapers: *Il Giornale*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano* and *La Repubblica*.

<sup>8</sup> Availability at metro stations from the early hours of the day.



industries» (Tunstall, 2008 as cited by Lamour, *Idem*) which can have implications in both its editorial choices and its readership.

### 8. 3. *Diasporic media, rationale for selection*

For the diasporic media, based on Fleras (2009, 2015) model of social capital I set to map quantitative and qualitative trends in terms of geographic priority given to news coverage, as follows: a) host country; b) country of origin; c) transnational, thus impacting both spatial realities “here” and “there”; d) international focus. Topics were analysed further under their “bridging” and “bonding” dimensions. Refuge taking (Fleras, 2009) in the “bonding” dimension is argued, by some scholars as a factor inciting potentially dangerous “enclaves” and hence hindering the possibility of integration. The “bridging” dimension, on the contrary, can contain demonstrations of interest towards events affecting the host society and contribute to create bonds between the two groups.

Diasporic media come under different shapes, the tendency being that of an increasing presence of social media such as blogs, Facebook groups and other web platforms. In fact, all five of the diasporic media selected for my analysis are online, fact that can be attributed to the difficulties in financing a printed edition alongside the general popularity brought by the Web 2.0 (Oosterbaan, 2010; Georgiou, 2006; Shuter, 2012).

For the analysis two pan Latin-American media were selected: 1) *Expreso Latino*, one of the oldest and steadiest diasporic media in the Italian market (printed circulation of 40.000); and 2) *Guía Latina*, the “first Latin-American editorial group”, aimed at business advertisements but with prolific news topics production. It claims 500.000 online visualizations and a distribution of 100.00 printed magazines (*Guía Latina*, 2014). Both *Expreso latino* and *Guía latina* are written in Spanish language but both diffuse, contents in Italian language at times.

In Portuguese language, hence aimed exclusively at the Brazilian population, three media were selected:

1) *Sonhos na Itália*, a very popular and resistant blog by a young the Brazilian *Author* who shares service information mostly but also opinion making articles with a critical eye on both Brazil and Italy facts



of culture and society. Her blog has had so far circa 871.000 visualizations

2) *Achei*, a relatively recent (August, 2015) Brazilian online newspaper, featuring news, entertainment and classified contents<sup>9</sup>. The (open) Facebook page of *Brasileiros na Itália*, where news contents are posted on an intermittent basis, with new entries coming on a weekly basis<sup>10</sup>.

Contrariwise to the selected mainstream media where topics were screened by pertinence, for the diasporic media, all published topics were deemed of interest for the analysis, even when not produced on a daily basis. Nevertheless, so far, 433 content units of diasporic media were analysed.

#### 8. 4. Interviews

My methodology is further complemented by approximately 40 semi-structured interviews of both Latin-American media producers and consumers of heterogeneous background (class, nationality, gender and age) both in Rome and Milan. The informers were selected through, institutions, associations of Latin-Americans and small businesses (consumers) and on the basis of the media for which they are working for (producers). Scarce available data accounting for diasporic minorities as audiences (Vivanco, 2014) make it challenging to interpretate intercultural dialogue on the basis of the use immigrants make of media. Ethnography is therefore a valuable source when trying to establish, even if just a small sample, of media consumption and habits.

### 9. Conclusions: preliminary findings

The immigration phenomenon in Italy, as elsewhere, in Europe and the world is not a temporary or transition phenomenon but rather a long-term process bringing along as many challenges as opportunities (Koser, 2007). The notion of interculturalism –although still used

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<sup>9</sup> Circulation/visualization figures currently unavailable.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*.



reluctantly in Italy – has emerged as an increasingly influential paradigm with which to advocate new models and understandings of key immigration –related issues such as identity, rights, and integration. If no official policies of integration seem to be place in Italy yet, albeit its almost 40 years of inward immigration history, it is perhaps a good timing to reflect upon what is *de facto* a multicultural society, however, resisting to recognise itself as such. It is also perhaps the right time to forearm against some of the failures pointed out to multiculturalism policies, such as that of the creation of “ghettos” (Groppi, 2016), while at the same time recognizing the economic (*Corriere della sera*, 2016), social and urban improvements (Broccolini, 2014) that immigrant communities can bring along.

Through its innovative feature of responsibility-sharing, interculturalism, places new actors at the centre of the implementation of its best practices. Individuals, civil society, workplaces, educators and media do not replace the State and institutions but rather they complement it. Interculturalism aims at promoting approaches that are bottom up in nature, instead of the common top-down approaches of other paradigms. Based on the assumption of an existent dualism between majority and minorities and by choosing to focus this research on the role of communication, I attempt to assess intercultural dialogue dynamics in both mainstream and diasporic media.

### *9. 1. Immigration in Italian mainstream media*

Preliminary results of the ongoing research suggest that when it comes to the mainstream media landscape in Italy, the latter is still anchored in an anachronistic speech dominated by a “methodological nationalism” extended to media and the coverage of issues related to immigration. In very broad interpretation and adaption of the concept (Beck, 2003), I argue that the flaws of methodological nationalism are being used by mainstream media in Italy, through: a) its rigid “national outlook”, obsession with territoriality, borders and security; b) assumption of the nation-state as natural form of society.

Because of the responsibility media hold in influencing society, and as primary channel through which immigration is interpreted, the perspective of a “national outlook” is not a superficial problem and contains as many errors as that of the social observer, for it accepts «national borders as the



borders of society and as the necessary institutional nexus for citizenship and democratic rights» (Beck, 2011: 55). The state survives hence in people's imaginary (Beck, 2003) through mainstream's media daily support.

Unsurprisingly, and in a mere corroboration of the results other scholars shared before (Binotto and Martino, 2004; Sredanovic and Farina, 2015; Vivanco, 2014; Meli, 2015), mainstream media in Italy is still tainted of stereotyped, "emergency" and invisibility scenarios when framing immigration. Theft, armed robbery, drug smuggling and murder (often intra-group) head the list of the sample analysis, conducted for this research project, that covered the first semester of 2016. A contrasting immigration narrative thus urges, addressed at what is no longer «a catholic, male and heterosexual audience only» (Bellu, 2015: 9-10).

The simple example of food consumption as a manifestation of trivial cosmopolitanism and the numerous foreign *cuisines* present in both Rome and Milan can serve as trigger for a significant finding. Restaurant reviews on foreign owned restaurants, omnipresent daily in the press, are more likely to be found in Milanese newspapers than in their Roman peers<sup>11</sup>. Can that of Milan be considered a more open media reality, prone to intercultural dialogue? Hypothesis will be formulated upon in-depth analysis to be conducted in the coming months of this research project. It is nevertheless worth mentioning the exceptions – small however significant breaches – that are paving the way to intercultural dialogue of which are example, incidentally other media based in Lombardia: a) the intercultural content blog *La città nuova*, of *Corriere della sera*; b) the space given to minorities in both production and content of Tgr Lombardia (Vivanco, 2014) c) examples of changes in language and concepts when covering immigration related topics.

## 9.2. Latin-American diasporic media: more bridging than bonding?

Regarding the Latin-American diasporic media, they can be found in different formats, but some common denominators can be identified. On one hand, a clear presence of the "bonding" (Fleras, 2009; 2015) dimension,

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<sup>11</sup> In the period of analysis, only one article was found, in Roman newspapers, where a review of foreign cuisines figured.



visible in numerous topics on the homeland and celebration of the community accomplishments. The five media monitored all show numerous examples of the bonding trait that ultimately can be understood as justification for the very existence of the diasporic media. The equally significant space given to topics relating to service/administrative information reinforces the “bonding” nature of this kind of media capacity. On the other hand, topics privileging “bridging” dimensions are also to be found across all five diasporic media. It results as a clear statement that intercultural dialogue is sought from diasporic media, but to which extent? In fact, only one of the Latin-American diasporic media go deeper beyond the telegraphic account of events affecting the host society<sup>12</sup>. The articulation and space dedicated, by some diasporic media, to some of the hot topics affecting host society<sup>13</sup>, could be deemed of interest even for the national readership, who do not always find mainstream media messages as straight-forward.

If it is true that space allocated to both “bonding” and “bridging” are given equal priority by all five Latin-American diasporic media, the same cannot be said for the emphasis that each of them chooses to place on each dimension. Format, space available (often very limited) and editorial line can be determinant in such choices and their subsequent impact in their audiences. In view of an optimal intercultural media integration, more in-depth coverage of host society topics is thus needed from diasporic media.

### 9.3. Hybridity

Do people then pay attention to media who pay attention to them, as Fleras (2015) sustains? Present research’s findings point into direction that seems to contrast that idea.

In fact, through the interviews conducted so far it comes across that: a) not only immigrants are not necessarily consumers of diasporic media; b) even when they are such choice is not made in detriment of the consumption of Italian mainstream media. «I try to read a bit of

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<sup>12</sup> «Itália tem modelo arcaico, diz senador italo-brasileiro» (*Achei*, 23/02/2016); «Senado aprova união civil gay na Itália mas proíbe adoção» (*Achei*, 26/02/2016).

<sup>13</sup> The first semester of 2016 was dominated by political debates on civil partnerships and eventual rights by gay couples to adopt the children of the partner in case of death.



everything, a lot of blogs at the end of the day, because media are you know [...] In Italy I read *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere* [...] I like LA7. It is very different from Brazilian TV, where you either have *TVAberta*, pure entertainment or *Globo*, which is rightwing and monopolizes the whole scenery and which basically manipulates [...] here you have more options, people are far more politicized», C. a Brazilian blogger based in Rome says. One of the hypothesis is that those choices can be linked to either a need to deepen knowledge of some topics; an appreciation for the host country's media openness when discussing politics or even as integration tactic, with the purpose of improving the knowledge of the host language. In the words of another interviewee: «Peruvian newspapers I almost never see them [...] First thing in the morning I do, I put on Tg5 [...] From Monday to Saturday all I access is in Italian, why? Because it helps me to pronounce words better and how shall I say, to get acquainted with the verbs in order to be able to talk more than anything. And logically because one must have an interest in the news of the place where he lives in, to know more about the culture». Media use is thus articulated in a logic of complementarity, and of «what newspapers write, however, is not necessarily what their readers think» (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004: 114).

The present paper's findings should be considered in the light of an exploratory research combining both the prism of diasporic and mainstream media's production and consumption. It attempts to further understand the phenomenon of immigration and adaptation of immigrants into a different country, framed by intercultural dialogue.

Its preliminary findings are novel and illuminate that diasporic media play a complementary role to mainstream media in meeting intercultural dialogue throughout the integration process of immigrants. We can conceptualize diasporic media as one media source that is part of a bigger media system that complements, leads to and reinforces intercultural dialogue in a multicultural society. Moreover, empirical research, from media use and content perspectives shows immigrants as seekers of various media sources, to meet their information needs. In the same vein, this paper further reinforces previous views on mainstream media that denounce them as stagnated in terms of the way they frame immigration, highlighting, however, the recent reluctant but significant changes to such approach. Finally, it advocates for future research on diasporic media that can possibly cover for a more diverse and representative sample of nationalities, with a stronger presence in



the Italian territory such as the Chinese, Bangladeshi, Romanian to account for any differences in responses concerning their own integration dynamics.

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