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University of Educational Management, NAES of Ukraine &  
Institute for Social and Political Psychology, NAES of Ukraine  
Center for Social Representations Studies in Indonesia  
Institute of Social Sciences of Serbia  
Mykolas Romeris University  
Institute of Psychology, University of Pécs  
Moldova State University

# **Political and Economic Self-Constitution: Media, Citizenship Activity and Political Polarization**

Proceedings of the VII international scientific and practical seminar  
June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Padua, Italy

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Edited by  
Irina Bondarevskaya, Alessandro De Carlo



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**CONTROVERSIAL SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT  
MIGRANTS  
FROM MULTI-VOICE AND MULTI-AGENTS  
(SCIENTIFIC, INSTITUTIONAL AND LAY PEOPLE)  
DISCOURSES  
AND IMMIGRANT'S EXPERIENCES**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The migration is a phenomenon old like the homo sapiens.

“About 60,000 years ago our sapiens ancestors left Africa (from there we all come, although with the passage of time we are getting a little discolored....), and one migration after another arrived first in the Middle East and, 20,000 years later in Europe: where 250,000 years before we find the traces of the oldest Neanderthals, arrived also from elsewhere. No European is a European native if we go back far enough in history!” (Allievi, 2018a, p. 3 – 4, my transl.)

It is enough to visit Museums of History of cities in old and new continents to be exposed to an impressive history of migrations along millennia: in some cases of “immigration”, in others of “emigration”, finally in others in alternate directions (immigration / migration) depending on the historical circumstances or even with concurrent directions of migratory fluxes of different target groups. “The history is a history of migrations. And it starts from afar: in prehistory” (Allievi, 2018b, p. 4)

Today the technological innovation in the interconnected world at global scale has not eliminated the physical mobility at local, national and transnational level. On the contrary the global interconnection and the communication in real time has multiplied the need and desire for relocation of different length (temporary, long term or permanent / irreversible).

If these facts are indisputable, what is surely object of perceptual distortion and ideological polarization is the representation of the figures of the migratory phenomenon in the media and in the multi voice discourse. It is enough to consider that in 2017 London is the sixth Italian city for the number of Italian citizens who have relocated in the UK capital and it surely counter evident to the majority of the people that the number of Italian emigrants (almost 200.000 in 2017) are higher than the 119.000 immigrants

who landed in Italy in the same year. However, the perception of the immigrants is almost generally estimated much higher than the Italian emigrants.

The diffused perception of the immigrants as the “others”, the “unknown”, “foreign” is often assimilated with “dangerous”, “extraneous” and generally presented in the media as “invasors”, or stigmatized as potential “terrorists”, legitimizing “fear” and evoking the “need for barriers” and protection of the own territory by the population of the host country. On the other side they are perceived as “social victims” and marginalized groups.

The “classification” and “naming” of these groups (out-group or in-group depending on the level of exclusion / inclusion process under the supra-ordered category of humanity) – as essential “anchoring” processes well defined by the social representation theory (Moscovici, S. 1961 / 1976; 1980; Jodelet, 1989; de Rosa 2002; 2011; 2013b; 2018; 2019; Rateau & Lo Monaco, 2013) – are interesting to be studied as social construction, serving more the legitimization of policies and legal status adopted for the social control of the phenomenon than to describe the reality. “ In this mass movement it is nearly impossible to distinguish between the ‘political’ and the ‘economic’ migrant: the distinction exists legally and politically, but not in social reality.” Henk Overbeck (1995: 15)

On the subject of migration the ideological positioning appears determinant to construct the representations of the phenomenon “immigration” even before to know and analyze it: “we divide each other even before putting the basic data of the problem on the table” (Allievi, 2018b, XV). Findings from many interesting studies on social representations of migrants in the media show the polarised ‘alternative’ representations of

“migrants constructed in economic (e.g., as assets to economy) and humanitarian (e.g., as victims) terms in the favourable representations, whereas in the unfavourable ones, migrants were constructed primarily as a threat to the local economy, to security, and to the nation’s culture and existence” (Kadianaki, et al., 2018).

## **OBJECTIVES**

This contribution illustrates the complex design of an on-going wide research program articulated through multiple research lines involving “media” and “field” studies, aimed at investigating the construction / sharing / polarization of the social representations and attitudes as function of different political-ideological positioning of social subjects (individuals / groups, organisations / institutions, experts / journalists / lay peoples) and of identity belonging, that guide the processes of social inclusion / exclusion towards the migrants / refugees.

The several interrelated research lines on “media studies” are guided by the objectives to reconstruct the ‘multi-voice’ and ‘multi-agents’ discourse on the phenomenon of migratory fluxes and the diverse social actors involved, analysing: a) the “scientific discourse” by the experts; b) the “institutional and policies oriented discourse” by different political, governmental and humanitarian institutions, international associations, etc.; c) the “lay people discourse” for and among citizens.

The research lines on ‘field studies’ conducted in two EU countries (Italy and Germany) are aimed at reconstructing significant elements of the migratory experience in different target population, adopting a theoretical and

methodological perspective that involves a set of interrelated psycho-social dimensions evoking iconic-imaginary representations linked to symbols, metaphors, social memory, multi-dimensional identity (personal, place, national and supra-national identities), cultural-normative expectations, feelings, experiential narratives, applying specific ad hoc designed instruments and methodologies with the principal actors' direct involvement in the study (2<sup>nd</sup> generation of young immigrants, adults migrants / refugees, relief agents and receiving communities).

## **METHOD AND PROCEDURES**

The research design is inspired by the 'modelling approach to social representations' (de Rosa, 2013, 2014), that moves beyond the cumulative view of summing-up different techniques, as in the traditional multi-method, in favour of the creation of techniques guided by specific hypotheses concerning the role of multi-channel (textual, verbal, iconic, imaginary, projective, structured, etc.) communicative tools, the data analyses strategies and the multi-theoretical and multi-constructs options chosen for the dimensional analyses under investigation.

In this study the research plan accounts for the complexity of interactions considering both "media" and "field" studies, analysing different sources from "scientific", "institutional" and "lay people" discourses on migration, and designing specific tools for data acquisition for the 'field studies'.

As regards the "media studies" a systematic analysis using different strategies for data analysis (multi-dimensional thematic analysis of

correspondence, network analysis etc.) will be conducted on almost 6500 sources, including:

- a. for the *SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE*: international scientific literature by social scientists inspired by the social representations theory and by other theories and disciplinary approaches extracted from the *SoReCom A.S.de Rosa @-library*, using as *key-search*: *migrant, immigrant, refugees, migration, immigration*;
- b. for the *INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE*: texts, reports, documents, speeches, etc. on institutional ‘policies’ by political and governmental institutions, humanitarian organisation / associations at national or international level or even influential sources like single political leaders of different orientations or religious authorities;
- c. for the *LAY PEOPLE DISCOURSE* “for” or “among” citizens by journalists and ordinary people: articles, texts, videos, images extracted from online newspapers of different political orientations (like the Italian *La Repubblica*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Il Mattino*, *Liberio*) and from the most popular social media and multimedia sources (like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *YouTube*, *SkyTG24*).

The research lines based on “field studies” are focussed on different target population of immigrants, including: (2<sup>nd</sup> generation of young immigrants, adult migrants / refugees, relief agents and receiving communities).

- 89 adolescents 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants from Philippine to Italy attending higher schools and college for the Philippine community in Rome (Italy);
- 100 adults equally distributed between migrants / refugees in Germany coming from different countries of the world (mainly from Africa) and



humanitarian professional workers and citizens living in the local community close to the host centres receiving the immigrants interviewed.

The various techniques, using different communicative channels (figurative-iconic, verbal-textual, narrative), include:

- A. the *Figurative Technique about the travel experience from the origin to the host country* (and back, if any imagined) *integrated by 'storytelling'* (de Rosa, 2017)
- B. the *Associative Network Technique* (de Rosa, 1995, 2002, 2003, 2005), including as stimuli words depending on the research target population, related to own nationality of the origin and of the host country, to supranational entity and to self-identity.
- C. the *World EuroSky Compass* (de Rosa, 2017) an adaptation on global scale of the research tool *EuroSky Compass* (de Rosa, 2005),
- D. the *Contextual and socio-demographic interview*

This semi-structured and open narrative based tool – designed by de Rosa and adapted according to the specific research target and context of the two field studies in collaboration with the interviewers S. Balbutin and S. Silvestri – detect information about 4 main areas:

- Personal data (of the interviewed immigrant / refugee and of his / her relatives);
- Background of the migratory experience and identity dimensions of belonging;
- Information on the breadth of the family and social network and frequency and communication methods with family, friends and acquaintances both in the country of origin and in the host country;
- Perceptions of the surrounding psycho-social environments and host community.

## RESULTS

At the current stage of our study, as regards as the ‘media studies’ on “multi-voices” and “multi-agents” discourses two rounds of data collection have been completed during 2017 – 2018 and 2018 – 2019 involving almost 200 participants in the master course on Social Representations and Communication and the research laboratory on “New media and Web-Marketing” directed by de Rosa – at the Faculty of Medicine and Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome and in collaboration with the early stage research assistant Martina Latini (as far as it concerns the research lines on the ‘scientific discourse’ and the ‘institutional discourse’) and with the senior researcher Elena Bocci (as far as it concerns the several research lines on ‘lay people’ discourse by online newspapers and new media (social media and multi-media). Descriptive and multi-dimensional analyses of the impressive amount of sources gathered in the two academic years of data collection are still on going.

Some exemplary results will be presented also regarding the field studies – conducted respectively in Italy on the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of adolescent migrants from Philippine in collaboration with Shiella Balbutin and in Germany on immigrants / refugees from world-wide countries, professional social workers and community neighbors in collaboration with Stefania Silvestri, doctoral trainees enrolled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of the *European / International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication*. Being the data analyses still ongoing, the presentation will be aimed mainly to illustrate the various research techniques devised ad hoc by de Rosa (travel design and "storytelling"; associative network; contextual interview), and to enlighten some significant elements denoting experiential process of social

inclusion / integration or rather exclusion / separation between the life before and after the migratory experience, detecting emotions, memories, expectations, metaphors, symbolic representational dimensions connected to the experience of travel and hospitality, in relation to the identity feelings of belonging to the origin and host countries.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Once all the descriptive and multidimensional analyses will be concluded both at the level of each research line and at the multi-level cross-analysis of the results based on the multiple research lines, our research program will contribute to further comprehension of the dynamic between social representations, mediated by multi-channel communication, embedded in social practices and policies oriented to social inclusion / exclusion in relation to contemporary migratory phenomena, looking at the intersection of the social representations shaped by different multi-voices and multi-agents discourse (scientific, institutional, lay people) and experiential narratives by different target populations of the involved actors (young immigrants of second generation, adult immigrants / refugees, professional social workers and host communities).