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BRIDGES OR WALLS?
Pope Francis versus Donald Trump’s polarized views of transnational migration

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Although the “the history is a history of migrations. And it starts from afar: in prehistory” (Allievi, 2018) , the contemporary migration is generally perceived as an ‘emergency crisis’.

It is surely object of perceptual distortion and ideological polarisation the representation of the figures of the migratory phenomenon in the media and in the multi voice discourse. The diffused representation of the immigrants as the “others”, the “unknown”, “foreign” is often assimilated with “dangerous”, “extraneous” and generally presented in the media as “invasors”, or stigmatised as potential “terrorists”, legitimising “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 marginalised groups.

The “*classification*” and “*naming*” of the marginalised out-groups - as essential “anchoring” processes well defined by the social representation theory - are interesting to be studied as social construction, serving more the legitimation of policies and legal status adopted for the social control of the phenomenon than to describe the reality: it is the case of the distinction of the “political refugees” from the “economic migrants”.

The guiding objective is the investigation – through multiple channels of media and field studies – of the construction/sharing/polarization of social representations and attitudes in function of different ideological positioning (individuals/groups/organizations/institutions, experts/lay people) and of identity/ies belonging, that orient the processes of social inclusion/exclusion regarding the migrants.

In this contribution we will present empirical results aimed at detecting polarized social representations of migrants in the “political-institutional” discourses and “lay people” communication in the various scenarios of the social media, through analyses of metaphorical dichotomies of inclusive/exclusive policies faced to migratory fluxes (like “bridges” versus “walls” in the exemplary discourse by Pope Francis versus Donald Trump’s polarized views of transnational migration).

Keywords:

Migration phenomenon, inclusive/exclusive policies, institutional and lay people discourse, polarised social representations and metaphors