Views on migration in the Italian media Discursive practices during the 2018 election campaign

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Photo source: "Aesthetic of Migrations" exhibition, Giovanni Perillo

Introduction

- *Puzzle* of migrants in Italy;

- Media - sensitive topics of debate during electoral campaigns, such as migration, health, labor market, national economy, etc.;

- The analysis of media discourse on migration in Italy in the context of the **2018 general elections**;

- Analysis period: February-March 2018;

- 2 national daily newspapers from Italy: **La Repubblica** and **Libero Quotidiano.**
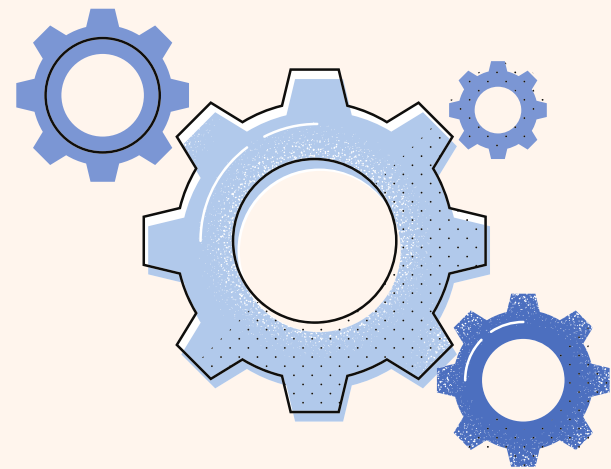
Context

- Italy – one of the main European destination countries for migrants;

- The elections of 2018:

- - "a subtle 'change in the mood' of Italians towards the European Union has been reflected in growing skepticism about the EU amongst Italians" (Bull, 2018, p. 3).

- - a 'test' for Italian and European stability in the rise of two populist and anti-system parties.


Dove vivono gli immigrati
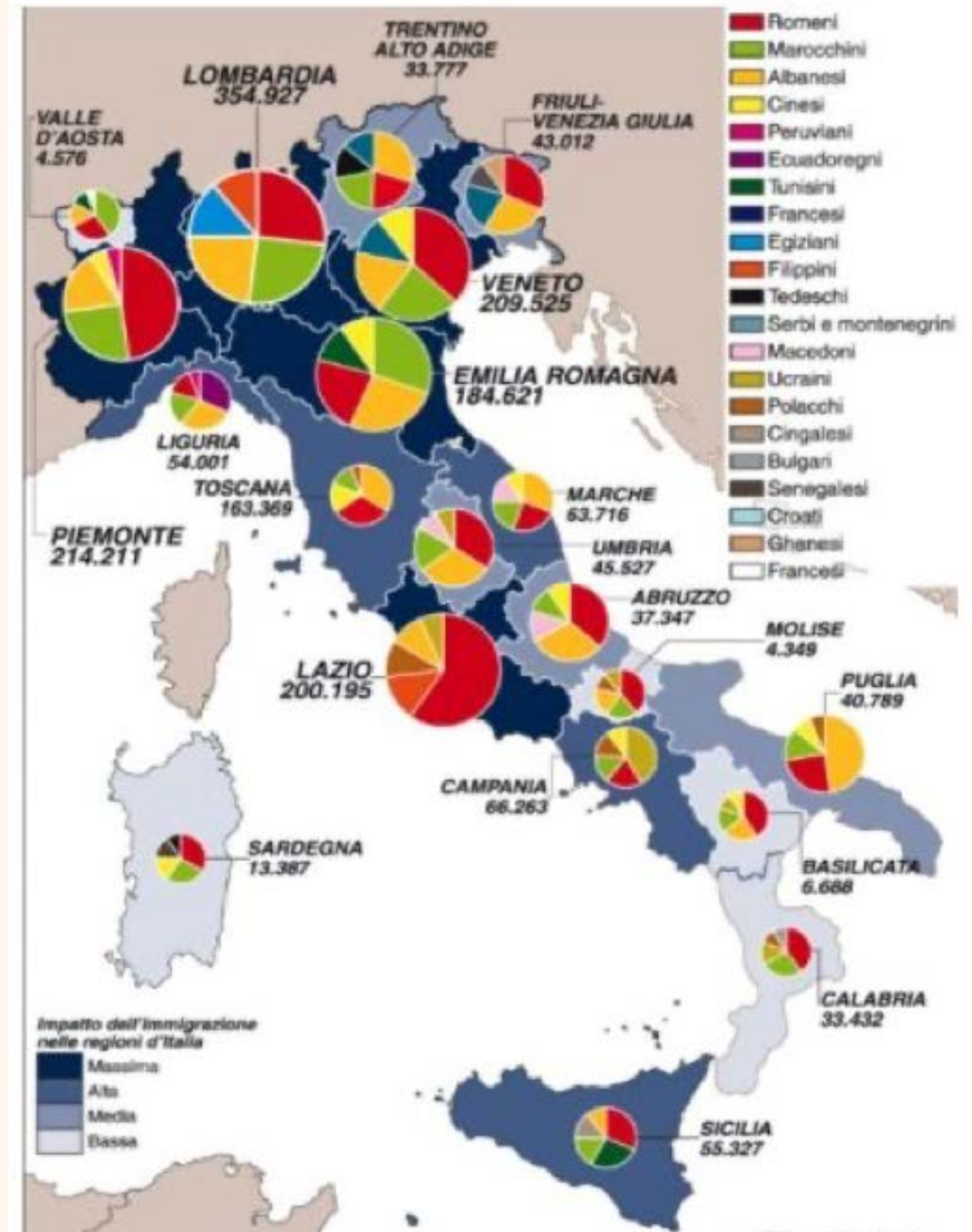
Research objectives

01
Analysis of the media coverage practices of migration (intra-EU migration, refugees) by the media in Italy as a country of destination, in a specific period of time and according to a certain political-electoral context.
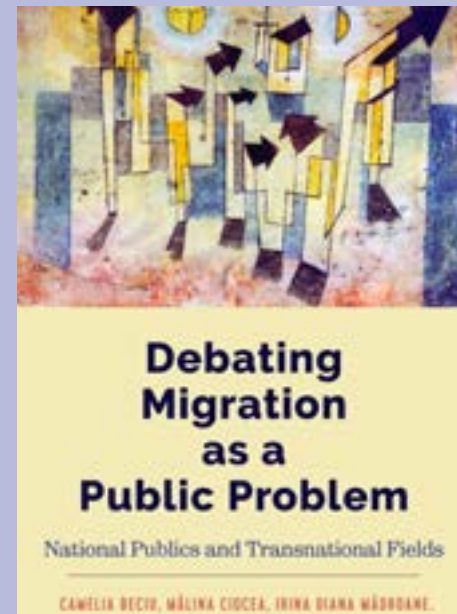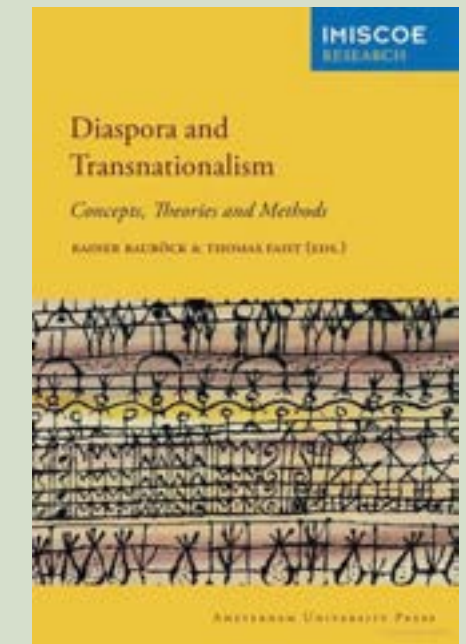
02
Analysis of representations of migration actors in the Italian media in a specific context.

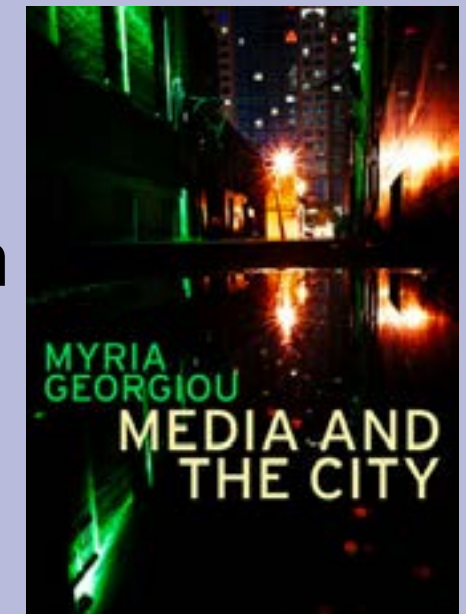# Theoretical framework
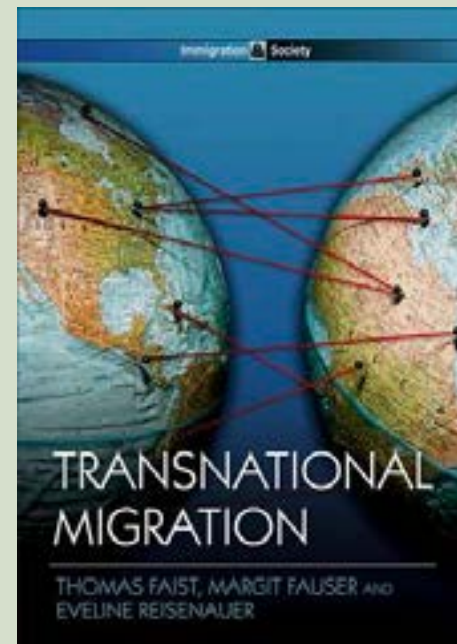
Transnationalism and migration

Media and migration

1. Transnationalism and migration

country of origin/country of destination

transnational citizenship

transnational social field

social actions 'at a distance'

2. Media and migration

„Discourses differ in how social events are represented, what is excluded or included, how abstractly or concretely events are represented, and how more specifically the processes and relations, social actors, time and place of events are represented". (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17).

symbolic power of media

media discourse

the ethics of "migration control"

representation of the 'voices' of migrants

Analysis period

> 2018 Parliamentary/local elections in Italy

Anti-system and populist parties promoted an anti-migration rhetoric:

- **Center-right coalition:** *Lega, Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, and Noi con l'Italia* (37.25%)

- **Center-left coalition:** *Pd, +Europa, Civica Popolare, and Italia Europa Insieme* (22.9%)

- ***Movimento Cinque Stelle*** (populist rhetoric) (32.5%)

Object of study

Center-left political orientation

Center-right political orientation

Selection:
- The popularity and the political orientation of the selected newspapers;
- Online search/newspapers archives
- Keywords: 'migrant', 'illegal migrant', 'refugee', and 'foreigner'/ based on the nationality

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

REPRESENTATION

Nomination strategies

- discursive construction ->
- methafors
- verbs and nouns used to denote
- processes and actions, etc.

Predication strategies

- evaluative attributes (positive/negative)
- descriptions
- comparisons etc.

- What elements of representation of actors are included or excluded?
- How abstractly or concretely the actors represented?
- What types of linguistic elements are present?
- How are actors represented (active/passive, named/classified, specific/generic)?
- How is the relation between 'space–time' represented?

Findings

La Repubblica – 28 articles

Concrete representation:

- "six people, all <u>Africans</u>" (*La Repubblica*, 3 February 2018);
- "the main victims of migration out of control are <u>women</u>", "<u>Somali, Ethiopian and Eritrean citizens</u> at the boarder" (*Libero*, 4 February 2018).

Negative attributions:

- "Therefore, <u>only four out of ten migrants have the right to stay in Italy, the others have to leave</u> (...). It is impossible to know how many of the 46,176 asylum seekers left in Italy" (*La Repubblica*, 15 February 2018)

Libero Quotidiano – 60 articles

Use of metaphors:

- (Refugees as) "<u>the great invasion</u> (...) that put the white race at risk" (*Libero*, 16 February 2018)
- "<u>social bombs ready to explode</u> in Italy, (...) ready to commit felonies" (*La Repubblica*, 4 February 2018).

Space and time representation:

- "Migration is a very urgent matter. At present, there are <u>at least 630,000 migrants</u> in Italy, of which <u>only 5%, that is 30,000, have the right to remain</u> with a refugee or a war refugee status" (*La Repubblica, Libero*, 4 February 2018)

Findings (II)

February 3, 2018 – the attack of Luca Traini (a former candidate of *Lega*) who injured six Africans in a racially motivated attack in the city of Macerata:

- concrete description of migration issue/actors;
- visibility to the victims of the attack and also to the racism.

la Repubblica

Raid razzista a Macerata, spari contro gli africani: 6 feriti. Fermato italiano incensurato

L'uomo, Luca Traini, ha terrorizzato le vie del centro esplodendo colpi da un'auto in corsa, nella stessa zona dove abitava il presunto colpevole del delitto di Pamela, la ragazza fatta a pezzi. Inquirenti: "Non si conoscevano". Colpita anche la sede del Pd

Conclusions

Main topics that prevail in both newspapers:

- illegal migrants in Italy
- economic dimension (the budget spent by Italy on the refugee issue)
- xenophobic and racist attitudes towards foreign nationals in Italy
- anti-migration policies needed both at the national and EU level

Representation of migrants:

- mostly negative representations -> a strong polarization between 'us' (Italians) and 'them' (migrants) during the electoral campaign in 2018.

The sculpture dedicated to migrants in St. Peter's Square (Rome): "Angels Unawares" (Timothy Schmalz, 2019)

'Sleeping Migrant' Sculpture in Rome (Jago, 2022)

Thank you!

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