

Online Opposition to Immigration: how extremism are challenging the European Public Sphere

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An outcome of Refugee Crisis is the deterioration of the quality of the public sphere and a weakening of control over misinformation and populism. This is especially true considering social media as spaces of protest and discrimination against refugees and asylum seekers. Social Network Sites (SNS) represent specific spaces of public opinion, called third places, which are necessary for the construction and diffusion of public discourses. The contemporary debate defined cyberghettos (Dahlgren 2005; Papacharissi 2004) those closed cyberspaces where some processes of destabilization of political discourse are characterized by conflict and hate. In this ambit, SNS play a central role into the construction of migrants' representation and increased forms of discriminations and hostility.

This contribution presents an analysis of 3 Italian Facebook pages where users post comments towards migrants to identify the main forms of communication and discursive genres that are employed in constructing representations of the Refugee Crisis. A critical Discourse Analysis of comments will be carried out to examine the role of users in disseminating intolerance and racism focusing on the relationship between user-generated contents and arguments, rhetorics and political discourses of the new and old populism in the online public sphere.

Forced migrations have led to 3 different tensions: an internal one against migrants, one directed to how Italy is handling migrant emergency and a third one destined to change the shape of EU. These tensions are analyzed within daily comments: the outcome could be a closed public sphere that strengthens consensus towards policies that support closing borders and spread the hate speech online.