

# Social Representation of Human Rights about Migration in Italian Newspapers

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last decades there has been a worldwide increase in the migration flows that have triggered the creation of new management policies. The case of Europe is emblematic since it has faced massive migration flows coming from Africa and East Asia.

The need of international agreements and policies has been clear since the beginning of this growth due to the high numbers and complex migratory dynamics. Nevertheless, the socio-political scenario of the last few years has radically changed, renewing nationalistic and populist political stances which have made cooperative strategies between countries difficult. Moreover, external European frontiers (such as the one of the Mediterranean Sea) have become spaces in which the respect of human rights is challenged, and where a structural violence is applied on the life/body of borders crossers. Indeed, this is the first benchmark for Human Rights since they have been created in the post-WWII scenario.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY

To pursue this research interest, we referred to the Social Representations Theory (SRT). From SRT, social knowledge is made of representations constructed by daily and institutional interactions. According to this theory we can postulate different levels of knowledge, categorised (on the basis of their power, and their authority to orient social practices) in two universes: the reified universe where we find scientific and technical knowledge of social phenomena, and consensual universe where we can find everyday knowledge and social representations. We referred to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Geneva Convention of Refugees as Reified Universe, and focused on newspapers as media that have a mean role in shaping public opinion, and then in journalistic language as intersection between Reified and Consensual universes.

## CONSENSUAL UNIVERSE

### SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

**Newspapers**  
has a main role in shaping public opinion

**Journalistic language**  
as intersection between Reified universe and Consensual universe

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 1948

#### PREAMBLE

- Historical foundation of UDHR
- UDHR foundation of global human relationships
- «Highest aspiration of common people»
- Need to promote and to respect

#### ART. 1, 2, 3 - UNIVERSALITY

- Equality and freedom in dignity and rights
- No discrimination
- Life, liberty, security of the person

#### ART. 7, 13, 14, 15 - RIGHTS OF MIGRATION

- Prohibition of discriminations
- Freedom of movement
- Right of asylum
- Rights of citizenship

- UDHR;
- Asylum Seekers;
- «considering that the grant of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on certain countries, and that a satisfactory solution of a problem of which the United Nations has recognized the international scope and nature cannot therefore be achieved without international co-operation»;
- «a cause of tension between States»

### Geneva Convention, 1951

## REIFIED UNIVERSE

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### AIM

Starting from the categories of article utilised by the "founding fathers", to examine whether they are present in the reconstructions made by Italian newspapers

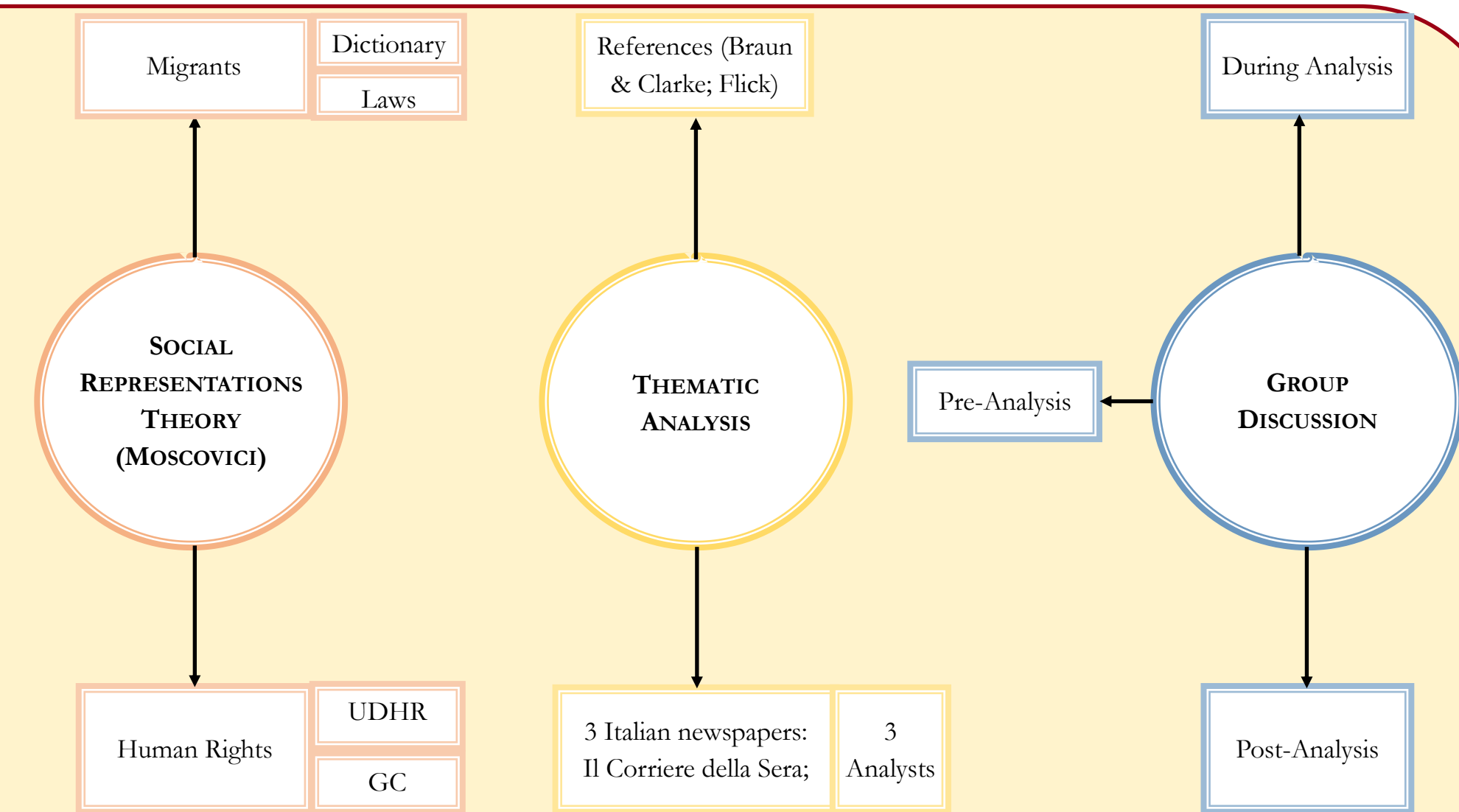
### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) Does themes through which «migrants' human rights» are framed reflect UDHR's themes?
- 2) What kind of differences and analogies are there between UDHR's themes and themes used by the Italian newspapers to frame «migrants' human rights»?

## SOURCES

from March 2017 to August 2017

<b>«Il Corriere della Sera»</b> Total found: 395 Pertinent: 142 NGO's: 29	<b>«Il Manifesto»</b> Total found: 436 Pertinent: 157 NGO's: 60
<b>«Il Giornale»</b> Total found: 359 Pertinent: 162 NGO's: 24	



## RESULTS - 1° RESEARCH QUESTION: THEMES

### COMMON THEMES

- RIGHT OF ASYLUM
- HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION
- RIGHT OF MIGRATION
- UNIVERSALITY
- LIFE AS FOUNDATION OF DEMOCRACY
- RIGHT TO LIFE
- RIGHT TO CITIZENSHIP

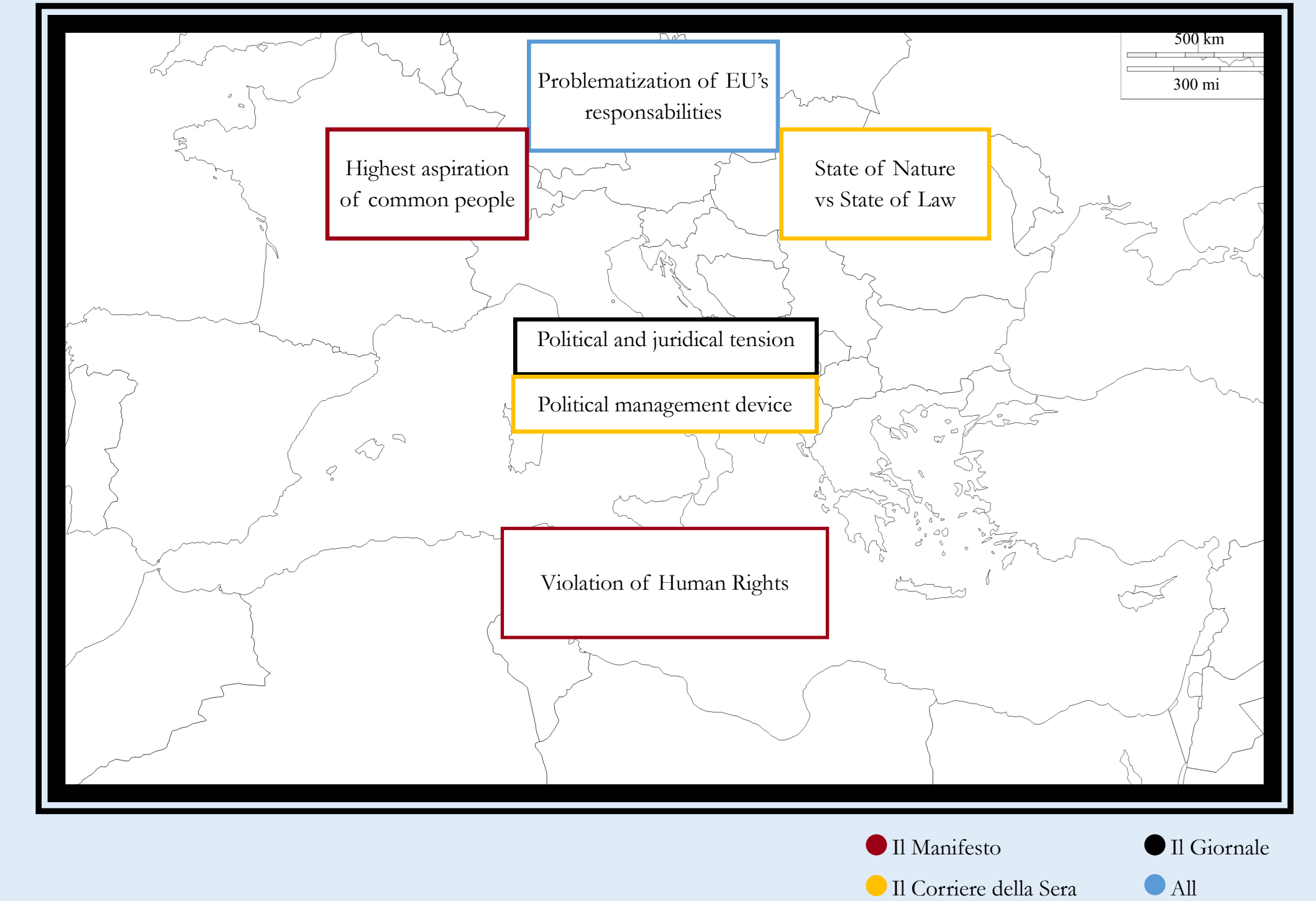
### NEW THEMES

- ECONOMIC VALUES OF MIGRANTS
- ETHNIC RIGHTS
- NEED TO DIFFERENTIATE WHO HAS THE RIGHT FROM WHO HAS NOT
- RIGHT TO RECEPTION

## RESULTS - 2° RESEARCH QUESTION

Moving on our second research question, we identified four themes and six sub-themes. The first three represent the *conditio sine qua non* for the existence of the UDHR: *Universalism of the Declaration's statements*, *Rights* as main object of these statements, and the *Human Being* as the bearer of these rights. Instead, the fourth theme is the specific focus of our research: the *Right of movement*. This theme is related to the others creating relationships of tension between them. The tension between the Universalism and Rights is represented by the sub-theme of the *Problematicization of EU's responsibilities* on the management of irregular migration, and on the failure to relocate migrants across European countries. This sub-theme runs through the newspapers, but with different overtones. On the one hand, "il Giornale" charges EU's Institutions of letting bear the whole burden of irregular migration and its consequences to Italy; on the other "il Manifesto" accuses EU's Institutions of violations of Human Rights With regard to "il Corriere della Sera", it addresses this issue quoting experts and problematicizing the EU's responsibility without making accuses. The tension between Rights and the Human Being is constituted by four sub-themes: we have found on "il Corriere della Sera" the conflicting claims between the *State of Law and National legislations*, and the use of irregular migrations as a *Political management device* that allows national policies. "Il Manifesto" frequently refers the *Violations of Human Rights* by Italian Institutions. While "il Giornale" focused on the *Political and juridical tensions* caused by the NGO's juridical case. In these articles, "il Giornale" highlights the criminality of NGO's activities and reduces political issues to an administrative dimension, neglecting reflections concerning political positions and political thoughts about the case. Finally, the tension between Universalism and Human Being consists of the representation of *Human Rights as the Highest aspiration of common people*. This sub-theme has been identified in "il Manifesto".

## RESULTS - 2° RESEARCH QUESTION: THE GEOGRAPHY OF RIGHTS



## FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Let us conclude with some considerations about the development of political thought, based on the results and on the analytic process we have conducted. From the thematic analysis came to the fore how social representations of Human Rights about migrants are constituted by several discourses, such as, economic, political, sociological, anthropological and psychological discourses. Therefore, political positioning needs a complex reading of these social phenomena. In fact, the complexity of these issues can't be reduced to ideological simplifications. We suggest the designing of educational programmes about the reading and interpretations of journalistic language. These programmes could provide tools for a critical reading and promote new positioning. Finally, during the analytical process we have put our political thoughts under critical revision. Therefore, these programmes could lead to a critical positioning and enhance the ability to engage constructive confrontations with different positioning.

## DISCUSSION

The horizontal issue under the three Italian newspapers we analysed is the Geography of Rights. UDHR represents the primordial act of inscription of the "naked-life" (the fact to be a living human being without legal status) into the legal and political framework of a Nation-State with universal pretensions. This operation creates the condition for an overlapping between the Declaration and the different National legislations. With regard to the Agamben's Theory of Field (1995) and the Cohen's Moral Panic Theory (1972), this might generate a State of Exception opening to different scenarios: 1) Human Rights turn out to be deprived from any sort of safeguard at the very moment they cannot be configured as citizens' rights; 2) A dislocation of rights as along with the operation to safeguard these rights, in a way that there seems to exist a symbolic border that designate where rights are applied and where they are not; 3) The concept of migrants as breaking point of the concept of Human Rights, as Hanna Arendt said (1994).

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