Diasporic and Local Mainstream Media as a Tool for Intercultural Integration? The Case of Latin American Communities in Italy

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Abstract In Italy, communication research on the impact of media on immigrants' integration dynamics has up until now privileged the sphere of national mainstream media. This paper takes into consideration the role of diasporic media as complimentary to the latter perspective. In an attempt to assess whether there is in fact an intercultural media integration process occurring in both the mainstream media and the diasporic media players in Italy, this paper focuses on gathering evidence from the media pertaining to the majoritarian society and from those created by and for immigrant communities, in this instance the Latin-American. This evaluation aims to establish the degree to which the two media poles take an interest in each other as well as the story telling they deploy of one another. Interculturalism and intercultural media integration are the main theoretical frameworks used to understand how intercultural dialogue is operationalized at the media level, namely through the production of contents and trends of media consumption. Preliminary findings suggest a local mainstream media scene out of step with the *de facto* multicultural society, whereas only in some cases do Latin-American diasporic media demonstrate integrative potential capable of" bridging the gap" with the host society rather than merely fulfilling its ingroup "bonding" role.

Keywords Diasporic Media, Mainstream Media, Intercultural Integration, Latin-Americans, Italy

1. Introduction

Immigration has an important cultural, social and economic impact on today's societies, especially in urban areas [1], [2]. Notwithstanding, the presence of immigrants is seldom acknowledged for its social significance and cultural and economic contribution [3], [4].In Italy, immigrants are a structural part of the labour market, their economic net contributions reach 96 billion euros in what represents a contribution of up to 8.8% of the country's total net wealth[5].National mainstream media seldom highlight such essential aspects of immigration [6], [7].Content featuring immigrants typically does not exercise priority within mainstream media's agenda setting, except as to highlight a scenario emergency, securitization or humanitarian crisis[8], [9], [10], [11]. In Italy, research into the phenomenon of immigration, and its communication implications, has principally been done through the prism of mainstream media production [10], [12], [13], [14]. Looking at immigration through the lenses of diasporic media therefore provides, not only an alternative, but also a complementary reading of the phenomenon. By placing its main actors (immigrants) at the centre of the analysis, this perspective allows the direct capturing of their voice, experiences and feelings towards life in the host society. What we know of society, the way we interpret a given phenomenon, such as that of immigration, is mostly absorbed through the media [6], [15]. Furthermore, the media contribute to forge a generalized public opinion. Whereas some scholarship has identified in media the power to produce a form of propaganda, even when benign [16], some authors deem the media's responsibility to be one of a "parallel school" [17], assuming thus the role of educator.

Bearing in mind the latter, the present analysis of the role of the media and its narrative impact on immigrant minorities in Italy, operates at different levels of interpretation. In this paper, some of the possible theoretical approaches to the impact of mainstream and diasporic media production has on immigrants and host society are discussed. An attempt was made to evaluate to which degree there is evidence of an intercultural media integration in play. To establish whether a propensity to the diffusion of a message of intercultural dialogue exists, in both the diasporic and mainstream media fora, the presumably innovative paradigm of interculturalism is taken as a departure point. More importantly for the argument made here, is a focus on its applicability to the role

of the media [18], based on model of intercultural media integration by Geiβler and Weber-Menges [19].Theoretically the study draws upon contemporary work on interculturalism [20, 21], [22].While concurring with the view that interculturalism remains but an apolitical feature of multiculturalism [23],it considers it to bea tool that can be downgraded to the micro level of society, i.e., individuals, local institutions and local media, in a complimentary way to the role the State has in propelling multicultural oriented policies. The cities of Rome and Milan, with a high concentration of Latin Americans, were at the centre of this analysis of mainstream and diasporic media content. In this sense, the emphasis turns to cosmopolitanism [3], [24] [25] as a way of living in today's global cities of Rome [26] and Milan. In this examination of diasporic media integrative potential, notions of diasporic media as social capital are drawn upon its conceptualization by Fleras' [27]. Finally, a more critical view on the work previously done in the field of intercultural media integration in Europe is established [18], [19] by arguing that, albeit pioneering, the principal focus of the studies conducted so far remained at the mainstream level of media production. Such studies gave scarce credibility to the production of media exercised by immigrants and minorities, by relegating it to a secondary level, ironically falling into a logic of methodological nationalism. In light of this, the researcher argues that both media systems, the mainstream and the diasporic, are equals in terms of importance and shared responsibility when the effort of putting intercultural dialogue to work comes into question. Moreover, this paper interprets the presumed harm brought about by diasporic media more optimistically.

2. The Latin American Communities in Italy – Similarities and Differences

The Latin-American community in Italy counts for a population of circa 400.000, legally resident who represent7% of the foreigners in Italy [28]. Although Peruvians, Brazilians and Ecuadorians are the most represented Latin-American nationalities, descendants of Italian colonisers to Latin-America, of the late 19th and early 20th century are also present in large numbers. Thus, among Latin American communities in Italy, three main sub-categories can be delineated: the first generation, the second generation and those of Italian ancestry. It should be noted that the children of long term immigrants in Italy are, to date, still unable to access Italian citizenship until they turn of legal age. The reform of the law in force of *jus sanguinis* has been on the agenda for over a decade in Parliament and is still awaiting formal approval. Latin Americans' long-term presence follows a steady flow of arrivals dating back to the late 1990's. Despite being considered "well-integrated" minorities, they face, like any other immigrant community, the challenges of adaptation and settlement in a new country in the form of difficulties in accessing the job market,

obtaining residence permits and facilitation of the family reunion process. Another essential aspect of some Latin-American immigration to Italy is the structural predominance of feminine migrants, often separated from their children [29]. It should be emphasized that a single Latin-American reality does not exist nor are there linear immigration circumstances or push factors to have propelled them in their choice of coming to Italy. Various authors therefore suggest caution when speaking of *latinos* as a whole [30], [31] insofar as their social background and immigration patterns differ substantially from country to country. The way in which they manifest belonging and relate to Italian society, varies according to the background leading to their immigration experience. Nonetheless, there are also similarities that can be traced among Latin-Americans. Firstly, the collective past marked by the history of colonialism and its legacy of race and class stratification stands out. This is something that they carry throughout the immigration path to Europe. Secondly, the immigration project of Latin Americans, regardless of their nationality, hints at a pattern of long-term settlement in Italy, Thirdly, violence, in the whole of Latin America emerges as another common denominator that plays a noticeable role in their decision for permanent settlement. The prospect of peace and safety that Italy offers all Latin-Americans, operates, according to the majority of the informants to this research, a level of importance that goes beyond pure economic motivation. Violence appears, furthermore, to have become part of some of the imaginary and prejudice that Latin-Americans in Italy face, namely through their association with criminal "baby-gangs", whose examples abound in the mainstream media [31], [32]. A simple search on Google combining the words *latinos* and *Milano* reveals the first 7 entries include content related to crimes committed by different Latin-American nationals in Milan, a clear sign of the predominance of such associations in the public mind.

3. Diasporic Media: an Emerging Complementary Field to Traditional Communication Research in the Context of Migration

A range of terms can be associated with the media created by and for different types of minorities. In fact, terminology is deeply dependent on a country's history and immigration context and reflects the heterogeneity of situations they cover. For the purposes of this study the use of *diasporic* over alternatives such as ethnic, multicultural or minority media is advocated. [1] *Diasporic media* is understood as media produced *by* and *for* a specific immigrant community

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1 The task of distinguishing and arguing in favour of the use of *diasporic* over the catch-all term "ethnic media" is not undertaken here. It is however deemed worthy of in-depth reflection, in the context of the researcher's PhD thesis.

and its descendants (second and third generation). In a modern, exhaustive, inclusive assessment [4], [34], [35], diaspora can include any mass movement originated by immigration. Diasporas are in this instance to be understood in their multiple dimensions. Thus, as "layered by periods of migration, the extent of[their] integration into receiving societies, and the maintenance of links with the land of origin as well as with other parts of the transnational group" [36, p.2]. Furthermore, the use of *diasporic* in the context of media production is intertwined with its targeted audiences, "a public that is not generic but denoted by their origins, migratory path, social condition, difficulties arising from their employment, housing and bureaucratic situations" as well as a "processes of cultural, religious and identity transformation"[37, p.20].The aspect of durability is key in supporting preference for the term: the continuity of a cultural background across generations takes into consideration the different interests that drive also the second generations to seek out such media. The search for a "link to others who are like them; those who have similar family histories, similar family traditions, similar problems and dreams and a common language" [38, p.8], present in second generations cannot be neglected. The simplification of such a broad and multi-layered concept as diaspora is here justified by its limited applicability to the context of media production and consumption. We will, therefore, be referring to Latin-American diasporic media, that is to say, all the media produced by and for Latin-Americans residing in Italy.

4. Interculturalism

4.1. A key Component of Multiculturalism

Assessing communication dynamics both for and about immigrants, drawing on the assumption of intercultural dialogue as an ideal, demands an understanding of the intellectual foundations and meanings of interculturalism. Theory, philosophy, policy or ultimately an orientation, whatever form interculturalism may assume, it has, for the past decades, been almost exclusively debated as a fierce opposition to multiculturalism. It is imperative, however, to start by acknowledging despite the last decade's backlash against multiculturalism, that interculturalism "builds upon the foundations of multiculturalism"[20, p.26]. Multiculturalism is hereby primarily understood as a fact, that is in its descriptive label and analytic dimensions, [39], [23], [40]. Put more simply, as the background context of many contemporary societies where different cultures live side by side. Multiculturalism proved to be an important basis for political conceptions of migration, hence some of its successes cannot simply be ignored nor denied, namely that of an uncontested recognition it confers to cultural diversity. In this sense multiculturalism will be understood as a space in which differences already co-habit; secondly interculturalism will be understood as a process, a dynamic

that advocates relationships between groups, individuals and institutions. It owes its foundations to the legacy of multiculturalist policies and principles. It acknowledges, though, the insufficiencies provided by (some) multiculturalist policies. Although rejecting most criticisms pointed at multiculturalism, it is of interest the way the new paradigm of interculturalism can favour processes of integration and enrich existing practices and policies of multiculturalism [41]. Specifically, this study examines the way interaction as process [40] can be a step forward(but not replace completely) from structural integration initiatives taken at Institutional level. To justify the interest for interculturalism this work also draws upon Canclini's [43] argument when he usefully distinguishes that "multiculturalism" presumes the tolerance "acceptance of the heterogenous" whereas "interculturalism" entails "relationships of negotiation, conflict and reciprocal accommodations" ([43] as cited in [39, xiv]) between different people. The influential political endorsement interculturalism has received from the European Union through the release of its *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue in 2008*[44] further supports the pertinence of the debate.

Specifically, what comes into question here is the inextricable relationship of immigration and the media and the ways in which interculturalism may be mainstreamed. Of interest here, is the bottom-up type of interculturalism, the one which complements political actions by delegating to citizens, local structures and the media the task of promoting the aforementioned relationship of negotiation. While some objections of interculturalism highlight its naivety [20] and scarce political applicability [23], seminal empirical experiments of interculturalism testify to its value. In Quebec, "the Bouchard -Taylor" Report of 2008 [45], narrowed down the importance of decision making to individual at the local level. In its conclusions, the report [45] stated that people preferred to take charge themselves of *ad hoc* situations in matters of negotiation of diversity, rather than having to increase the intervention of the State further.

By focusing on the media, and in particular their local dimensions, this study explores in which circumstances and through which contents they can intervene in order to promote a normalization of diversity, and escape the ruling logic of the immigrant as either victim, or hero [46] or cause of social problems [47]. Interculturalism can therefore represent a new facet of an advocated vernacular cosmopolitanism[24] and multiculturalism [39], in that it relegates to the ordinary and popular levels of society the responsibility of an engaged dialogue. Furthermore, interculturalism concretely demands beyond that, the acknowledgement of difference as an added value as well as an extension of social, economic and civil rights such as citizenship and the right to vote to long term immigrant minorities [19], [21]. Among the originality of its proposals is the open advocacy for miscegenation, allowing cultures to be modified by one another and evolve. Finally, it is in this

context, that the importance that the intercultural approach places on the permanent questioning of one's identity in relation to others emerges [48], as well as on Parekh's [49] argument that cultures other than one's own have something to teach us. It requires communicators to be further aware of any aspect of their own background - even challenge their personal values- that may prevent the understanding of otherness.

The use of the concept of interculturalism has been residual in Italy by way of academic development and political discourse, with the exception of research done mainly on the educational field [17], [18], [50] [51], [52] [53]. The fact that there is no official policy regarding the management of diversity [41], [54], is testimony to the difficulty Italy has in perceiving itself as a multicultural country. The "cautious" use of the concept in Italy and France comes to mind when Bouchard [22, p.11] reflects on "significant disparities between the ethnocultural reality of a nation and the general imaginary scheme through which it [the nation] thinks of itself" in what he goes on to define as "imaginary majorities". [ibid, p.14] Such an imaginary majority resonates with the historical context of Italy, where the construction of a fragile notion of national unity was reached a little over 150 years ago[6],[54,] [55], [56]. This of course finds repercussions in the study of diasporic media itself, which in Italy remains, by comparison to the rest of Europe and North-America, rather insipient. Likewise, updated and accurate data on diasporic media's presence is residual. Exception is made for a couple of notable pioneer studies conducted with the goal of mapping and quantifying the presence of diasporic media in Italy [55], [38].

4.2. The Local Dimension of Immigration

Does the local dimension of the lives immigrants lead in the two main Italian cities find space in mainstream media's narratives? In the same vein, to which extent does the local context matter in Latin-American immigrants' media choices? Over the past decades, large urban areas in many immigrant receiving countries such as Italy have seen the arrival of increasingly diverse groups of newcomers. The city thus becomes an important meeting point for immigrants. In the research presented here, Rome and Milan have been placed at the centre of the empirical research, drawing on both the cosmopolitan reflections of Beck [3] and the plea of scholars [24], [57] who call for a reflection through the lens of the city rather than that of the nation. Thus, borrowing from Beck's [3] reflections on cosmopolitanism and recent cross-disciplinary research in urban studies in Italy [26], this study concurs in advocating for methods that leave aside monocultural and mononational outlooks due to being out of step with nowadays' urban reality. Trivial examples of how cosmopolitanization happens in society can be found in the *métissage* of food culture, practices and consumption, in clear evidence of processes that escape a logic of national boundaries. Furthermore, relationships between media

production and territory are interlinked with the latter impacting and framing communication [58]. In her plea that the national media pay more attention to what is local, communication scholar Catherine Murray [57, p.11], states: "we need a far more effective story on local news from the perspective of international immigrants, permanent residents and their next generation". Italian research, conducted in the field of media and minorities has also emphasized how unsuccessful local media's input was, in their attempt to portray diversity. In COSPE's [55] seminal work, a major finding emerges which is that the existent Italian media system is characterised by: a) a weak presence of the local dimension; b) little priority given to service information. Such editorial preferences are described as a "sacrifice" of local information[59]made in the sake of the construction of a unified political national identity. Surprisingly, they argue further, even local press was unable to grasp the citizens' immediate demands and failed in representing them, also with consequences for the immigrant communities.

Geography is both physical and imaginary in the lives of immigrants, some of its barriers have been overcome with the transnationalization of communication practices. The use immigrants make of media, mainly as a result of the advent of social media, allows them, nowadays, "to connect to the local, the national and the global creating new forms of belonging in space and mind"[60]and offers the possibility of an omnipresence of both" here" and "there".

In this light, communication plays a central role in the daily lives of immigrants, the underlying objective of the present research is to decode, through their practices of production and their media choices, the complexity of an identity of belonging, self-representation and how integration can be negotiated by combining the use of mainstream and diasporic media.

4.3. Intercultural Media Integration – "Normalising" Diversity through Intercultural Dialogue

How can then the principles of interculturalism be put into practice by the media? Intercultural dialogue entails a bottom-up shared responsibility that is no longer only that pertaining to the State. Thus, also the public and private sectors including the business world, pressure groups, the individuals and the media are involved in putting intercultural dialogue to work. Interculturalism requires a forum, a space for interaction and dialogue to take place. Intercultural dialogue, as a practice, can be empowered and endorsed by the media system. Considering the assumption that intercultural dialogue is optimal and desirable [49], [18], [45], [20, 21], in which capacity can content conveyed by media result in greater interaction between immigrants and the host society or simply facilitate for a more objective knowledge of one another? Is there space in Italian mainstream media for a portrayal of immigration that concedes both visibility and an unbiased account of immigrants and minorities' daily lives? At the same time,

can diasporic media, in this instance those serving the Latin-American communities provide space, not only for the justified desire of an immigrant community to bond with its past and traditions [4], [37], [34], but simultaneously promote knowledge about topics and events affecting the host society? Can diasporic media go further beyond its usual service information provider capacity to guide newcomers and experienced immigrants and actually engage in a dialogue where topics that relate to host society at large are covered too? Part of the role of the media of a migrant community consists in the facilitation of networks but it is also essential in acting as a countervailing representation of that same community [61],[62], as opposed to the depiction mainstream media makes of it, often "stereotypical and alienating"[63 p.434]. Several authors consider that diasporic media can support and act as a means of integration by giving visibility and participation to minorities in the general public sphere [4] [63], [37], [38], [10]. Notwithstanding, other studies on media pertaining to minorities [64, 65], agree that its use, especially if prolonged overtime [66] promotes immigrants' own 'ghettoisation' considering the engagement with diasporic media only as an exercise of hermetic consolidation of their original cultural identity. With the advent of social networks, there is scholarship arguing, in reference to some virtual communities, that engagement with media focused on minorities happens "at the expense" of their host country's identity [67 as cited in 68]. From the residual, albeit important, work done on immigrant and minority media in Italy, there emerges interesting findings. Maneri and Meli [38] identified already a decade ago, the almost complete absence, in diasporic media, of coverage relating to Italian politics. This is, partially, supported by the evidence collected in the present research. The gap in coverage (of Italian politics) can be interpreted as an important factor when attempting to understand how intercultural dialogue manifests itself across Latin-American diasporic media. Maneri and Meli [38] also emphasise the lack of space dedicated by diasporic media to the "economy, as traditionally understood" and sports issues, something that finds corroboration too in the findings presented here. The goal of the research was that of testing whether the model of "intercultural media integration"[19] by Geiβler and Weber-Menges can be used to frame the production reality of local mainstream and Latin-American diasporic media and their audiences in the Italian context.

In light of the literature review, intercultural media integration builds upon various paradigms, of which, the active acceptance of the necessity of immigration and the advocacy for dual citizenship are perceived as key towards a successful integration process.

The integrative model of media is one in which the local host population and minorities mingle, thus allowing for intercultural communication to take place [19].Homogeneity is not expected but rather mutual knowledge and communication about the differences between the communities (host and newcomer). Intercultural media integration supposes a proportional participation of minorities in the majority/mainstream media, as well as formulates both the ideal functions of targeting minorities media, by expecting that migrants with knowledge of the host society produce such media in a way that promotes intercultural integration. At the same time, mainstream media are urged to echo minorities more frequently and more visibly while promoting adequate coverage of the issues that immigrant communities face. Geiβler and Weber-Menges [19]outline three aspects to the model, which the present research draws on as a blueprint with which to frame its own analysis:

a) *Media production*: this stipulates that at the level of mainstream media immigrants and minorities take an active participation in its production. Immigrants with knowledge of the host society produce such media themselves or at least participate in their production in order to ensure that the content is designed in a way that promotes intercultural integration.

b) *Content*: this presumes that mainstream media accept the necessity of immigration, the necessity of a minimum acculturation from immigrant minorities albeit showing tolerance towards any ethnic particularity.

c) *Media use*: whilst it is unrealistic to expect the host society audiences to make use of diasporic media, if for nothing else than the lack of knowledge of their language, it is, on the other hand, essential that minorities instead do make use of mainstream media in order to integrate.

However, both the research conducted by Geiβler and Weber-Menges[19] and Corte [18] present an ironic gap present in the advocacy of an interculturalist type of journalism and the way of setting the news agendas. Namely in the way that it appears to ignore, or at least relegate to a secondary plan, the way diasporic media can contribute to such an interrelation as it places the emphasis virtually only on the improvements needed in the practices of mainstream media. For example, in their study of Turkish, Russian and Italian minorities' media consumption in Germany, it is not clear how diasporic media can ensure that their content production is interculturally adequate. By the same token, Corte [18]in his study of multicultural media[2] in Italy, focus almost exclusively on language and deontological issues that need revisitation in the production of mainstream media. Although his own critique of *multicultural media* reveals essential insights in the way diversity was portrayed, the fact that the focus of analysis was principally on State owned multicultural media downplays the importance of media which are actually produced by immigrants and not *by* the

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2 In Italy, there is widespread preference for the term multicultural when referring to media produced by and for immigrant minorities.

State/Institutions *for* immigrants. Albeit benign in its "methodological nationalism" because both studies assertively observe the flaws of the national media Institutions, by neglecting the equal role diasporic media production can have in the management of an intercultural dialogue message they are nevertheless reading the media reality unilaterally. None of the two studies provided clues on how to empirically grasp interculturality in the shape of diasporic media production. Instead, diasporic media, in order to become truly equal players in interculturalism, should be endorsed with the credibility of being able to do so. Pioneering work done on the field of intercultural media integration thus seems, to have downplayed an equal credibility and responsibility present in the media produced by and for immigration minorities.

To further support the simultaneous content analysis of local mainstream and Latin American diasporic media content in this study it was deemed useful to combine Geiβler and Weber-Menges [19] model described above with Fleras's ([27], [69]) conceptualization of diasporic media as social capital. Fleras develops social capital as a concept based on two dimensions of "bonding" and of "bridging" [69, p. 727] and inward and outward manifestations of social capital. It is suggested that Fleras' approach be deployed in a slightly revised and reduced form. Here elements of bridging and bonding are privileged in the content analysis as one of the ways to evaluate and trace the propensity for intercultural dialogue. Moreover, in order to optimize the analysis, two further elements are introduced as evidence of diasporic media's inclination towards interculturalism: a) that of transparency of messages when portraying their own group and b) an "integrative-oriented" element whenever informative and educational topics on the host society (outgroup, the "other") are displayed. Analyzing the field of diasporic and mainstream media produced in Italy thus requires novel approaches informed by recent debates privileging interculturalism as a process. In the same vein, integration is intended as process, an alternative to rushed assimilation. Considering the theoretical framework on media, integration and interculturalism the implications of the present case-study are now presented.

5. Methodology

It is hypothesised that the general lack of research on diasporic media might find its justification in the difficulty in finding a bilingual researcher [61]. Thus, pragmatic factors such as the proficiency in both Portuguese and Spanish of the researcher allowed focus on Latin-American media production. Understanding the language in which the production of diasporic media takes places being key to an accurate and unbiased research as well as reducing the costs of eventual translations.

5.1. Data Collection by Means of Media Monitoring: Content Analysis

One of the hypotheses of this study is that both mainstream and diasporic media can contribute to the integration process of immigrants. This research project looks at the trends in the representation of immigrants in the Italian national mainstream media, and those of Latin-American communities in particular. Drawing on both the model of intercultural media integration developed by Geiβler and Weber-Menges [19] and that of Fleras' conceptualisation of diasporic media as social capital [27, 69] this research project attempts at analysing whether any form of intercultural dialogue is occurring in both the Italian mainstream media and diasporic media landscape, in this instance the Latin-American one. Through the analysis of Italian mainstream media content, this research focuses on how messages conveyed in both media sectors may or may not reflect intercultural dialogue efforts. In parallel, the research includes analysis of content originating in Latin American media produced locally (diasporic media) and semi-structured interviews with Latin-Americans resident in Italy. For the sake of the analysis, it is considered that messages conveying the notion of intercultural dialogue, in the local mainstream media, can be understood as including at least one of these multiple facets: visibility offered to immigrant communities, "normalisation" of their political and economic participation, as well as space conferred to their self and counter representation. The focus of this paper is on Italian mainstream media with a regional focus: Rome and Milan, two urban centres with a high concentration of Latin-Americans. For the paper's analysis of local mainstream media, the following elements were taken into consideration:

- Presence of resident and stable immigration topics: i.e. how immigrants are depicted; what space do they occupy in the news and in particular Latin Americans. Because of a wish to focus on long term immigrants and their descendants, any content directly or indirectly related to the Mediterranean refugee/asylum seeker crisis and cultural minorities comprising cultural and religious minorities of Italian nationality (i.e.: The Jewish, the Roma, the Waldensian) have been deliberately excluded.
- Evidence of any attempt to capture content relating to Latin-American countries in the agenda of local mainstream media, with the logic of mutual knowledge underpinning intercultural dialogue.

A breakdown by topic (i.e.: sports; business, food, entertainment, security/crime, politics, cultural diversity, facts of culture and society) was applied to the content. In total, 437 content units were analysed.

All the media selected for analysis were monitored during a five-day week (weekends excluded). The content analysis for both local mainstream and diasporic contents had a duration of six months. The analysis began in the second week of January, 2016 and lasted until the second week of July 2016. The choice of the first semester of 2016 was not random as it coincided with the political campaign for mayor in both Milan and Rome, and one of the underlying goals of the analysis was also that of attempting to establish a link between the impact immigration on local politics and vice-versa.

5.2. Mainstream Media- Rationale for Selection

Six national mainstream media outlets, with regional focus, were selected: 1) the Lazio and 2) Lombardia TV regional daily evening news (*Telegiornale*) broadcast by RAI (state owned); 3) the newspaper *Il Messaggero* (printed edition), one of the biggest in terms of print circulation in the city of Rome; 4) the online edition of *Corriere della Sera Milano*, the newspaper's dedicated annex to the region of Milan*;* the 5) Rome and 6) Milan printed editions of the free daily *Leggo*. Both the TV channel RAI and the two paid-for newspapers selected (*Il Messaggero* and *Corriere della Sera*) can be considered as following a neutral editorial line. The analysis has deliberately left out newspapers and TV broadcasts that are more politicized. Admittedly, not even an intentional non-biased selection of presumably neutral newspapers avoids the extremely politicized nature of the Italian media system [70].Where possible I tried to use the printed edition of each newspaper. The underpinning logic was that printed editions and TV are still preferred by most of the public [70] as well as the fact they cater for a more heterogeneous audience, whereas online editions require a higher acquaintance with the use the internet, a trend that, although increasing, does not reach 5% of the total newspaper readership in Italy [71]. The exception was the *Corriere della Sera – Milano* edition because of the physical impossibility of buying it in Milan, the only way of accessing it was online. As for the free dailies, the logic underpinning such a choice was that of a heterogeneous audience. Moreover, free dailies cover for a larger readership because of availability at metro stations from the early hours of the day. By adding the perspective of the free press to the content analysis, one is able to cover an audience which is no longer necessarily interested in "the paid press" [58,p. 831]. However, the very short, commercial and uniformed content, provided by the free press, should be cautiously interpreted and therefore admittedly has implications in both its editorial choices and its readership.

5.3. Diasporic Media – Rationale for Selection

Several factors must be taken into account when choosing which diasporic media to analyse. A publication's, website's or social media's circulation is one factor, though it is admittedly an element that can be easily biased or inflated [72]. There is no difficulty in doing so, especially for those online and given the lack of data available in Italy on minorities' consumption habits, in this instance, in their capacity as audiences [10]. Also, in addition to circulation numbers and the target audience, consulting with immigrants themselves, alongside a SERP Google investigation, was useful to get a sense of which publications, websites and social media are the most popular. This paper's analysis of diasporic media, based on Fleras' [27, 69] conceptualization of diasporic media as social capital, aims to map quantitative and qualitative trends in terms of geographic priority given to news coverage. Hence, the items were categorized accordingly: a) host country b) country of origin c) transnational (thus impacting both spatial realities" here" and "there") d) international focus. Topics were analysed further under their "bridging" and "bonding" dimensions. Refuge taking in the "bonding" dimension[69] is argued to represent a factor inciting potentially dangerous "enclaves" and hence hindering the possibility of integration. The "bridging" dimension, on the contrary, can contain demonstrations of interest towards topics and events affecting the host society and contribute to create bonds between the two groups.

Diasporic media come indifferent shapes and sizes, the tendency being that of an increasing presence of social media such as blogs, Facebook groups and other web platforms. In fact, all five of the diasporic media selected for analysis are online; a fact that can be attributed to the difficulties faced by diasporic media in financing a printed edition in the face of the general popularity brought by the Web 2.0 [4], [67], [73].

The period of analysis was the same as the period chosen for local mainstream media: from the second week of January 2016 until the second week of July 2016. This simultaneity of analysis between mainstream and diasporic media was deemed of interest in the prospect of evaluating how the same topics might have been differently approached. Given the extreme vulnerability of diasporic media to survive in the market, websites where the posting activity was more abundant were privileged. Frequent posting meant that it could vary from a maximum of daily to minimum of weekly activity. In addition, there was an attempt to combine the analysis of new media with more traditional type of newspapers even if online.

For the content analysis two pan Latin-American media were selected: **1)** *Expreso Latino*, one of the oldest and steadiest diasporic media examples in the Italian market. Its online readership is estimated at around 3000 (interview notes), with an additional printed circulation of 40.000and **2)** *Guía Latina*, the "first Latin American editorial group", aimed principally at business advertisements but with a prolific news topics production. It claims 500.000 online views and a distribution of 100.000 printed magazines [74] Both *Expreso Latino* and *Guía Latina* are written in Spanish language but both include contents in the Italian language at times. They are not aimed at a specific nationality, but rather

take advantage of the Spanish language as an aggregating element in view of reaching a wider Latin American public. In the Portuguese language, hence aimed exclusively at the Brazilian population, three media sources were selected:

1) *Sonhos na Itália,* a very popular blog by a young the Brazilian author who shares service information but also opinion making articles with a critical eye on both Brazil and Italy culture and society. The blog has claimed so far circa 871.000 views (blog's own statistics).

2) *Achei,* a short-lived Brazilian online newspaper, featuring news, entertainment and classified content. Just like numerous other ephemeral diasporic media initiatives, *Achei* ceased its activity approximately one year after its launching (2015-2016).

3) The (open) Facebook page of *Brasileiros na Itália*, where news content is posted on an intermittent basis, with new entries coming on a weekly basis.

Contrary to the selected mainstream media where topics were screened by pertinence, in the analysis of the diasporic media, all published topics were deemed to be of interest. In total, 478items of diasporic media were analysed.

5.4. Interviews

The methodology was further complemented by semi-structured interviews with22 informants including both Latin-American media producers and consumers of heterogeneous background (class, nationality, gender and age),in Rome and Milan. The informers were selected through institutions, associations of Latin-Americans and small businesses (consumers) and based on the media for which they work (producers). Scarce available data accounting for diasporic minorities as audiences make it further challenging to perform an evaluation of the degree of intercultural dialogue, based on the use immigrants make of media. Ethnography is therefore a valuable source when trying to establish, even if just a small sample, media consumption and habits.

5.5. Netnography

Social media are a potential space for intercultural communication because the focus is on interaction, in the ability they have to function as fora for potential co-existence, negotiation and representation of different cultural forms. The internet has become a very rich research field for researchers who have identified in-depth its main aspects: nicknames, emotional interactions, the constructions of identity, online group dynamics etc. [75]. With the advent of social media, new ways of querying about audiences' opinions emerge through the online observation. In a second phase, this research turned to the use of netnography techniques. Netnography refers to, in a nutshell, doing ethnography online [76]. Two online communities were selected as case studies that allow to evaluate ways of

interaction between users. The first is the Facebook page of the homonymous blog *Sonhos na Itália*, aimed at a Brazilian audience. The second, *Peruanos en Italia*, is a Facebook page which contains also an online radio programme, dedicated exclusively to the Peruvian public. The online communities selected are both "open" Facebook group pages.

The online observation took place over a six-month period from October 2016 to March 2017. Scholarship diverges on the assessment of how the online observation should be performed. Kozinets, a pioneer in netnographic studies, is adamant about the observer being explicitly open about the research he is conducting [76], other scholars retain that it is precisely the "lurking" that represents the biggest advantage of netnography [77], [78]. Ultimately, it could be argued that the issue poses in fact a false problem, the internet being public, the information is available, regardless of the objectives presented by the social researcher. For the purposes of the present paper a "semi-lurking" approach was sought, in the way that the managers of both online communities were aware, informed about and interviewed for the purposes of the research. Contrary to scholarship which advises that public introduction be extended to the members of the online communities and that an online participation must be sought from the researcher [76], [79], that option was not undertaken here. The anonymity of the members was nevertheless guaranteed. The outcome of the observation of the interaction between members of online communities, through the analysis of their posts and comments, reinforces the results of offline ethnography. In fact, it further supports the notion that different actors express different media needs and consumption habits as well as suggesting the numerous ways in which individuals can relate to, and engage in, both culture of origin and host society.

6. Discussion

6.1. Representation of Immigrants in Mainstream Media

Italy counts over 5 million foreigners alongside its 60 million overall population. Immigrants from different areas of the world have been flocking to the Peninsula since the 1980's. A presence of over three decades that Amato [80, p.9] ironically evoked as "no alarms, we are simply becoming a multicultural country". The media histories of immigrants and minorities remain, however, largely unknown in their respective settlement societies. Different studies point to repeating patterns throughout the past decades, in which there are concerns the representation of immigrants in the Italian mainstream media: a) with the newspapers: featuring a prevalent "criminal", alarmist [81], [6], [12], [8] and securitization obsessed narrative [11] especially when some nationalities are concerned [82] b) immigrants as either perpetrators of such crimes or victims of harsh labour

conditions [6], [46] c) a TV culture that sends on air shows that help to create fear [83], framed by the dominant political speech of "immigration-insecurity" [84, p: 31).

Furthermore, the language used to convey content on immigrants and minorities is often used inaccurately [8],although in recent years there have been some changes [10]. This resonates with some of this paper's findings. From the mainstream content analysis, Latin-Americans result misrepresented. Often in the same article, the words *Latino*, South-American and the nationality itself, are likely to appear interchangeably in reference to the same individual, in what appears to be an essentialization exercise[31].

Another element, to be considered, within a logic of media instrumentalisation by some political factions and even institutions in Italy, is a widespread racism [85] and stigmatisation of Islam[86]. Ultimately such practices are facilitated by the internet and its sometime anonymity. A case meriting attention dates to the nomination of Cécile Kyenge as Italy's first black minister (Minister of Integration, 2013-2014), who was subject to violent racist insults originating not only from the extreme right-wing parties but also from institutional exponents and members of the Government/Senate who "walked away" thanks to their political immunity [87].

The way social inclusion and integration develop is, to a great extent, dependent on the way the migration phenomenon is perceived both politically and symbolically. Some authors do not hesitate referring to Italy as a reception country whose nature is "excluding" [88]). Other authors [89], mention an Italian society split in two: "one who is hostile (or almost) to immigration and another one who is in favour (or at least not against it)". This dichotomy is reflected in the audiences' reactions to some of mainstream media's attempts to portray migration and Italy's increasing multicultural reality. Exceptions to a scenario of generalized misrepresentation, include scattered programmes: as for example the weekly *Radici* of RAI3 (TV channel) and TG Mediterraneo, a format co-produced by Rai, France 3 and Rtve covering all Mediterranean countries. *Real Time*, a private entertainment channel also dedicated a miniseries to second generation Indians entitled "*Italiani made in India*" and Chinese in Italy entitled *"Italiani made in China"*: starring six youngsters divided between East and West who travel to discover their origins in India and China respectively. These formats are the evidence of a change of times, and of some mainstream propensity towards an intercultural dialogue. Such initiatives remain, nevertheless, volatile because of the only temporary priority they have on mainstream media's agendas. More daring, albeit short-lived, mainstream media experiments included *Babel TV* (Sky group) a rather successful (2, 5 million viewers) TV channel entirely dedicated to the world of immigration in Italy, that shut down in 2014. The media titan Sky, inspired by its British peers, broadcasted a few episodes of *Cronache di frontiera* (in its British version, *Immigration Street*), a documentary that gave voice to the immigrant minorities living on the outskirts of Rome and Milan, "live and without mediators" [90]. The four-episode miniseries proved to be successful causing both praise and furor embodied in messages on the Sky's social media pages. Part of the public raged against the programme denouncing its advocacy of immigration and accusing it of being "anti-Italian", attitudes that corroborate the existent literature on racism in Italy. Not only is racism very alive, its perpetrators rely on the web's anonymity to make it proliferate [85], [87]. In the twitter account of #**cronachedifrontiera** some comments go beyond outrage: " I mean a Chinese girl who says that it is not that they [immigrants] take away our jobs , but it is the Italians who do not feel like working. YOU SHOULD DIE. #**cronachedifrontiera**". Insults, xenophobic and offensive messages abound: "I am not sure who is more disgusting the Muslims or the fake Milanese" [91]. Nonetheless, an equivalent number of comments on Sky TG 24h programme Twitter account #**CronacheDiFrontiera**, defends and commends the programme. Comments vary: "great job, dramatically, real"; "the programme itself is worth the price of the channel's subscription"; "can someone show this to useless politicians with no view over globalisation issues"

The outcome of this research suggests too that when it comes to the local mainstream media landscape in Italy, the latter is, mostly, still anchored in an anachronistic speech dominated by a "nationalism" extended to media and the coverage of issues related to immigration. In fact, such results are in line with most literature to date on the matter. Three decades have passed since the first arrivals of inward immigration. Nonetheless, there has been little in the way of changes in the mainstream media, namely at the local level, in terms of representation of immigrants. In an admittedly, very broad interpretation and adaption of the concept , this paper argues that the flaws of methodological nationalism [3] are being used by mainstream media in Italy, through: a) its rigid "national outlook", obsession with territoriality, borders and security b) assumption of the nation-state as a natural form of society. This paper draws, instead, on a notion that considers media a "parallel school" [17], [18]. Thus, because of the responsibility the media hold in influencing society, and as primary channels through which immigration is interpreted, such a perpetuation of immigrants as "others "who are not fitting the perspective of a "national outlook" is not a superficial problem. This methodological nationalism contains just as many flaws as the kind typically found in certain areas of scholarship. Because it accepts "national borders as the borders of society as the necessary institutional nexus for citizenship and democratic rights" [25, p.55], the Nation-State survives in people's imaginations [3] with mainstream media's daily support. Unsurprisingly, and in corroboration with the results present in the bulk of work by numerous scholars [9],[10], [12], [14], mainstream media in Italy is still tainted by stereotyped "emergency" and invisibility scenarios when framing immigration. Theft, armed robbery, drug smuggling and murder head the list of the sample analysis, conducted

for this research project, which covered the first semester of 2016. Consequently, a contrasting immigration narrative has been urged, so that it can address what is no longer "a catholic, male and heterosexual audience only"[92].

Food consumption as a manifestation of trivial cosmopolitanism, serves as an example at the basis of a significant finding resulting from the content analysis on local mainstream media. Restaurant reviews on foreign owned restaurants, items typically omnipresent in the press, are more likely to be found in Milanese newspapers than in their Roman peers. Can that Milan be considered to own a more open media reality, prone to intercultural dialogue? The celebrations of the Chinese New Year, for instance, made first page in the local edition of *Corriere della Sera* [93]. Regional differences in the media contents of Rome and Milan can be context dependent, something on which only further studies could shed light. One of the hypotheses is that Milan fosters a more progressivist and cosmopolitan political view of immigration endorsed by the recent city administrations of Giuliano Pisapia (former mayor) and Giuseppe Sala (current mayor). Last February, a few mainstream media outlets in Italy echoed the polemic around the unusual afflux of Chinese voters for the primary elections of *Partito Democratico* (PD, Democratic Party) in Milan. To appease the polemic Giuseppe Sala, now mayor, then candidate, stated "*If I am elected mayor, in 4 years' time, immigrants will no longer be called that way, they are Milanese like any other*" [94]. What merits attention in this short-lived polemic is the generalized ignorance about long term immigrant residents' actual rights and some mainstream media's involvement in backing inaccurate, inappropriate, prejudice fuelled coverage through the message it chooses to publish [95], [96].

The city of Milan appears, in fact, as having a "capacity to absorb social and cultural change" [102].Studies of the city under new paradigms could shed led into the degree to which local policies [40] can influence the public opinion and local media message on immigration. Furthermore, this could help understand the crucial role of global cities for intercultural integration to take place, given that Milan is isolated in a region (Lombardy)ruled by a right-wing, anti-immigration party, the *Lega Nord*.

It is nevertheless worth mentioning the exceptions in some media–few but significant breaches in the status quo - that are paving the way for intercultural dialogue of which other media based in Lombardy, incidentally, are an example: a) the intercultural blueprint blog "*La città nuova*", of *Corriere della Sera*; b) the increasing space conferred to minorities in both production and content of TGR Lombardia [9] c) the changes in language use when covering immigration related topics, across the vast majority of mainstream media in Italy.

Contrariwise and by way of comparison, in the Roman media, stands out the "classical" framed portrayal of immigration, namely by way of its invisibility, stereotyping and correlation with insecurity. Consequently, interculturality gets very scarce opportunities to manifest itself in the Roman media. In fact, its very sheer manifestations do not go beyond one TV service on a multicultural children's choir at the outskirts of Rome [97] and the occasional foreign exhibition or artist in town [98]. The issues around the Chinese vote diverted to Rome as well. Nonetheless, only three contents marked immigration in connection with the run for mayor election topics. In one article, there is mention of an encounter of candidates with members of the Chinese community [99]. Roman politics are perceived as dissociated from the immigration reality [100], whether this is because parties simply do not have a programme dedicated to the diversity of the city or because the media do not confer space to it remains to be understood. One of the few politicians to have tackled immigration issues spontaneously, in the course of the run for mayor, belongs to a far-right party. His interventions not only get highlighted in the media (half page of *Il Mesaggero*) as they are fuelled by xenophobic comments [101]. Cultural minorities festivities such as Ramadan and the Chinese New Year were also absent from the agenda of the selected Roman media. The question on whether other cultural minorities remain absent from both the vote and the mediated debate remains unanswered, however it is here hypothesized that the media may follow the trends of the politics put in place across present and past municipal administrations .

6.2. The Latin-American Diasporic Media: More Bridging than Bonding?

It is worth highlighting that, at times, events that appear invisible to the mainstream media are advanced by some diasporic media, who taking the perspective of minorities to treat issues more in-depth. For example, at the time of the mayoral elections in both cities, a Brazilian [103] blogger displayed service information on immigrants' rights to vote in primary party elections. This proves diasporic media's readiness to provide local information that other channels do not seem to manage or are simply not interested in getting through, as the Chinese vote anecdote well illustrates.

Latin-American diasporic media can be found in different formats, but some common denominators can be identified. On the one hand, a clear presence of the "bonding" dimension [27], [69] is visible in numerous topics on the homeland and celebration of the community accomplishments. Of the 6 forms of media monitored in both the content analysis and the netnographic perspective, the general pictures shows numerous items manifesting the "bonding" dimension with the country of origin. Equally significant is the space allocated to topics relating to service information, which reinforces the "bonding" phenomena. A feature that denotes a palpable intercultural approach is shown in the shape of contents rich on topics concerning the daily local reality of Rome and Milan, a signal that could be interpreted as the capacity the city has of producing an interest over the nation in general. On the other hand, topics privileging "bridging" dimensions are visible across all

diasporic media, but one: the online community *Peruanos en Itália*. Hence, intercultural dialogue is sought from some diasporic media, but to which extent? "Hot" themes such as the political debates on civil partnerships and the rights of gay couples to adopt children in case of death, which dominated the first semester of 2016 in the Italian mainstream scene, seldom hit the headlines of diasporic media. Only two of the Latin-American diasporic media analysed go beyond the telegraphic account of events affecting the host society. The outcome of the research indicates that both the website of *Achei* and the blog *Sonhos na Itália* to have sought such best practices. Topics such as the reform of the Senate, the law introducing gay partnerships featured the headlines and postings of these two Brazilian media. Addressing in-depth such themes, demonstrates the diasporic media's capacity to treat mainstream topics in an articulated, often less unbiased manner. [104], [105], [106]. On the contrary, events that took place in Italy and even made international news such as the severe earthquakes that hit the central region of Italy in August, and October 2016 respectively, garnered little interest in most Latin American diasporic media. Whilst there is evidence of space being allocated to both "bonding" and "bridging" elements in Latin-American diasporic media, this finding cannot be generalized to the totality of the diasporic media here analysed. In the same vein, the emphasis that each medium chooses to place on host society contents varies. Thus, the format, the space available (often very limited) and the editorial line can be determinants in such choices and their subsequent impact on their audiences. In view of an optimal intercultural media integration, the barometer on diasporic media efforts is high in the case of the 2 Brazilian media *Achei* and *Sonhos na Itália* but insufficient for the other 4 Latin American media.

7. Conclusions

The concept of interculturalism – although still used reluctantly in Italy- has emerged as an increasingly influential paradigm with which to advocate new models and understandings of key immigration-related issues such as identity, rights, and integration. If no official policies of integration seem to be in place in Italy yet, despite almost 40 years of inward immigration history, the time is ripe to reflect upon what is *de facto* a multicultural society, which, however, resists recognising itself as such. It is also perhaps the right time to forearm against some of the failures pointed out in multiculturalism policies, such as that of the creation of "ghettos" [107], while at the same time recognizing the economic, social and urban improvements [108], [109] that immigrant communities can bring about.

Through its innovative feature of responsibility-sharing, interculturalism places new actors at the centre of the implementation of its best practices. Individuals, civil society, workplaces, educators and media do not replace the State and institutions but rather they complement it. Interculturalism aims, therefore, at promoting approaches that are bottom-up in nature, instead of the classic top-down approaches offered by the State, deemed too cumbersome for individuals to implement [45].

7.1. Hybridity – Immigrant Audiences' Consumption of Media

Do "people [then] pay attention to media which pays attention to them", as Fleras [27] sustains? Present research's findings point a direction that seems to contrast that idea.

In fact, through the interviews conducted so far it comes across that a) not only, immigrants are not necessarily consumers of diasporic media; b) even when they are, such a choice is not made to the detriment of the consumption of Italian mainstream media:

> I try to read a bit of everything, a lot of blogs at the end of the day, because media are, you know (…). In Italy, I read *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere*[della Sera] I like*LA7* [Italian private TV channel]. It is very different from Brazilian TV, where you either have *TVAberta*, pure entertainment or *Globo*, which is rightwing and monopolizes the whole scenery and which basically manipulates (…) here you have more options, people are far more politicized(C., female, Brazilian, blogger, has been in Italy for 5 years)

What also emerges is that the totality of Latin -Americans who informed this research make use of Italian media. On the contrary, not all of them combine it with the frequent use of diasporic media. The consumption of mainstream media is done in an optic of integration that, in their opinion, cannot happen without a knowledge of both the language and the society they live in now. One of the hypotheses is that such a choice can be associated with the need to deepen knowledge of some topics; an appreciation for Italy's media system, openness on debating political matters, or even as an integration strategy, with the purpose of improving knowledge of the host language. In the words of another interviewee:

> Peruvian newspapers I hardly see them (…) First thing in the morning I do, I put on *Tg5* [the news on Italian private TV channel]. From Monday to Saturday all I access is in Italian[why?] Because it helps me to pronounce words better and how shall I say, to get acquainted with the verbs to be able to talk, more than anything. And logically because one must have an interest in the news of the place where he lives in, to know more about the culture.(W, male, Peruvian, shoemaker, has been in Italy for 10 years.)

Media use is thus articulated in a logic of complementarity, and of "what newspapers write, however, is not necessarily what their readers think" [6, p. 114]. The present findings are novel and confirm that diasporic media play a

complementary role to mainstream media in fostering intercultural dialogue throughout the integration process of immigrants. We thus conceptualize diasporic media as one media source that is part of a bigger media system that can complement, lead to and reinforce intercultural dialogue in a multicultural society.

7.2. Taking the Pulse of Diasporic and Mainstream Media in Terms of Intercultural Propensity

This paper further corroborates the literature on the role of mainstream media in Italy and concurs with the perception that they are stagnated in the way they frame immigration. This paper highlights the significant, however reluctant, recent changes to the approach that has dominated the mainstream scene in the last decades.

Concerning the role of diasporic media, to generalize the results given the heterogeneity of their formats and agendas would be imprudent. This is because different actors generate different results. Most of the diasporic media under scrutiny, through both the content analysis and netnography techniques, demonstrate an interest in issues affecting the host society at large. They hence go beyond their typical function of providing service information to their audiences/public. This feature is significantly visible through the space that diasporic media confers to local information. This finding supports the suggestion that integration is mostly achievable through the city and the logic of reflecting on integration at a micro-level. It suggests that the city could actually have a beneficial effect on intercultural integration through the media. The space and reserved by Latin American diasporic media for content that interest the host society remain, however, incipient. The exceptions are the cases of *Sonhos na Itália* and *Achei*, incidentally both Brazilian publications. The way the Italian reality is approached, by the two, could be considered as a best practice in the diffusion of intercultural message. These two media outlets allow not only for an equal space to be dedicated to both *bonding* and *bridging* content but observe with interest as well as they develop the hot topics of the mainstream agenda.

7.2.1. Diasporic Media – A Threat to Integration?

Among the diasporic media selected, there was only one, *Peruanos en Italia*, with a quasi-absence of content covering issues affecting Italian society. This online community's agenda focuses exclusively on the country of origin (Peru) and information that can be of specific interest to the community in Italy. In terms of inclination towards an intercultural message, *Peruanos en Italia* demonstrates almost no *bridging* traits, and limits itself to promoting almost exclusively *bonding* ties with the country of origin.

It is, however, important to underline that even in the cases of diasporic media exclusively dedicated to *bonding* content, such focus does not necessarily harm an intercultural communication process at the level of its audience. This is

because the audience is entitled to "feed" from such media in order to satisfy the need for news from "back home". In fact, in the case of *Peruanos en Italia*, its founders explain the choice behind their agenda as a partly commercial, partly emotional one. The mission behind their existence is mainly that of giving knowledge of Peru to second generations in Italy

> not to lose the younger generations (…) to give priority to the famous under 30(…) make Peruvians feel proud of what they are.(…) A reference point. For Peruvians, to help each other out. To show all the talents (…) it was rather another type of choice and because [the mission] is to make Peruvians believe they are skilled, that they can make it (JC, Peruvian, founder of online community *Peruanos en Italia*, has lived in Italy for 10 years)

Furthermore, the online community does not represent Italy negatively nor do they neglect the importance of some issues faced differently by first and second generations. Shades of intercultural and intergenerational communication, are thus still present even if only tacitly implicit in some of the programmes offered:

> Now there is this lady who will come with her daughter for a new [radio] programme [on] how both of them see things from different perspectives [So, intergenerational?] Indeed, how each of them sees things. Say like, perhaps the mother wants her to have dual nationality and the daughter, like ourselves, says "what for?". (JC, male, Peruvian, founder of online community *Peruanos en Italia*, has lived in Italy for 10 years)

Our critique to the limited lenses offered by scholarship that reads the role of diasporic media, as merely potential containers of an "ethnicisation of media cultures" ([65 as cited in 110]) has two senses. Firstly, in the rejection of what some scholars call the "reinforcing of hermetic identities" putting minorities before an **either/or** choice, arguing that immigrants "cannot remain ethnic while also becoming highly adapted to a new culture" [66,p. 7]. Secondly, that most contemporary objections to the existence of diasporic media seems over-preoccupied with the role of Islam, incurring thus the risk of reducing all kinds of diversity to a single problem brought about by, admittedly, a more fundamentalist faction of Islam, while oblivious to a whole other wide set of existing nationalities, religions, cultures, habits, etc.

As per the results, this work has demonstrated this "ethnicization" of diasporic media not to be the case. Diasporic media do "support the long-distance cohesion of transnational "imagined communities" [110, p.7]. The most striking examples are *Peruanos en Italia* and *Expreso Latino*. The quest and celebration over a sometimes-imagined shared background culture is something this paper acknowledges and accepts unproblematically given that it represents the very essence of and *leitmotif* for diasporic media to exist [4].

However, it would be reductive to regard the whole practice and consumption of diasporic media without confronting "what it is that might be new and different about them" [110]. In the present research, diasporic media such as *Achei* and *Sonhos na Italia*, testify that diasporic media can go beyond mere concerns of "bonding" and/or "belonging".

In support of the argument that diasporic media, regardless of their agenda, do not hinder integration, is the process of hybridity in consumption, because in "consumption lies identity"[4]. This is because most Latin American immigrants' consumption of diasporic, transnational and national mainstream media happens with a critical engagement. This was explicit in the interviews, through their reflection on the limits of the freedom of press of Latin-American media; the critique of the exacerbations of some Italian mainstream media and even of the limited offer of diasporic media in Italy, which to some is actually invisible and lacking interest. The bulk of studies available on the impact of diasporic media among immigrant communities demonstrates that while it is true that keeping the right to a self-narrative, counter-representation and maintenance of cultural background is essential, ideally it should go *pari passu* with the openness to a new culture and society that migrant communities now find themselves in [4], [66], [111], [112]. The questions on the degree to which diasporic media should be made responsible for conveying an intercultural message, alongside the mainstream media, remain. Should not diasporic media also follow a code of conduct? Given their relative invisibility, non-professional nature and vulnerability both financially and in terms of permanence in the market, who should regulate it? In Italy, unlike what happens in North-America, diasporic, ethnic and minority media are not protected by a professional status [38], [9]. How should, for example, the absence of interest and coverage towards what affects mainstream society be tackled? Could a better recognition and eventual public financing help in the promotion of an intercultural dialogue whereby diasporic media also include the host society topics in their own agenda setting? The outcome of this paper suggests that time is right for immigrant minorities to be recognised as audiences, sources and actors or, in a nutshell, as full citizens.

7.2.2. Mainstream Media - An Aggregating Force

As for what concerns the mainstream media's inclination in divulging an intercultural message in the shape of accurate, unbiased and open to diversity content, the results of this research echo those of previous research [10], [12]on mainstream media attitudes in Italy. Latin-Americans, also form a community who feels misrepresented, or not represented at all, by the mainstream (field notes). Paradoxically, mainstream media remain central in aggregating immigrants around them. It is, in fact, the capacity of the mainstream in gathering consensus and in the construction of an increasing "Italian" and local identity that might appear surprising. In it, this paper finds a

counterargument to limited perspectives on the capacity of immigrants to mix and engage in new ways of belonging given that they operate in and across, at least, two cultural spaces [110]. Integrative functions of host mass communications have, besides, long been suggested in studies of immigrant adaptation demonstrating a correlation between use of host society mainstream media and the adaptation process. Such findings are not novel; almost a century ago Park [113] did not hesitate in attributing to mass media the role of Americanization of immigrants. This paper has contributed in determining the capacity of both diasporic and mainstream media in fostering intercultural dialogue. The Latin-American immigrants, who have informed this research appear therefore to have accomplished what is necessary to achieve a degree of intercultural communication, in view of their integration. Thus, at the individual level, they result interculturally "integrated". This paper establishes further that the better knowledge of one-another, between immigrant communities and host society, needs to be elevated further. Itis now up to media available in the Italian system to put in place a process of intercultural integration. This will depend, however, on mainstream media and diasporic media's efforts to achieve results that are similar to those achieved at the individual level. The methods and outcome of the present research can, moreover, serve as basis for an eventual extrapolation of the study to other actors in the shape of different immigrant communities.

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3 Website no longer available since the newspaper ceased its activity in July 2016
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