# FENÓMENOS DE INTEGRAÇÃO REGIONAL: OS CASOS DA UNIÃO EUROPEIA E O MERCOSUL

*PHENOMENA OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION: THE CASES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MERCOSUR*

# *The object of memory and the memory of the object: refugee crisis in the news on September 2nd 2015.*

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**Abstract**

This article aims to contribute on reflecting about the strict relation between an object (an image) and the memory, particularly regarding the memory in the news on September 2nd 2015 about the refugee crisis. Every year, Porto Editora (a Portuguese press company) holds a survey with ten words in order to elect the word of the year, and, for 2015, the elected one was "Refugees" (Palavra do Ano, 2015); this would be one more evidence of the impact of this issue in the news. The photo of a dead Syrian child on a beach in Turkey has become one of the most striking images of the refugee crisis in 2015. Curiously, *Muerte a las puertas del paraíso* (Death on paradise's gates) was the headline exactly fifteen years ago, on September 2nd 2000, when photojournalist Javier Bauluz caught the image of a dead immigrant who tried to cross illegally, facing down the sand on a beach in Spain. In both cases, could we say the image overcomes the news? Which one is to be considered the object of the memory: the refugee crisis itself or the image of the dead Syrian child as an icon of this crisis? The theoretical framework stands on a threefold argument: 1. Object, memory and discourse; 2. The memory of the news; 3. Europe, migration and refugee crisis. Finally, two interviews were undertaken (as part of the pilot study) in order to verify if the memory of the object were sufficient enough to turn it into the object of the memory, as well as, whether one's memory were somehow relevant to establish a collective memory.

**Keywords**: Memory; News; Image; Refugee crisis; Migration processes.

## 1. Object, memory and discourse.

Memory is one of those research fields that interacts with different areas of knowledge such as History, Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Psychiatry

and Linguistics. Its presence through the formation and recognition of social identities is directly related to the human capacity to build, transform and perpetuate it. This can be illustrated by the etymologic essence of *zekher*, a Hebrew word for "record", but that also refers to "remember" (Candau, 2014, p. 107). Our memories are built by many frames (recordings) that adjust themselves to fit in our narratives, as stated by Ricoeur, who prefers an Aristotelian approach to refer to *mimesis* as a construction, in which the dramatization adjusts itself in a reflection of the relation between narrative and time (Farquhar, 2010, pp. 39-52; Ricoeur, 1984, 2003). Therefore, a story is told as it was recorded in the memory, even if it doesn't rely on facts. Since childhood, we get used to learn the facts and we build our memory set with them, full of information from our daily experiences. This learning dynamics evolves as we age, as well as our relationship with the media becomes more intense, thus, in this contemporary discourse, social and cultural representations of the memory are also mental and public representations (Candau, 2014, p. 24).

Objects come to life and are given meaning in the memory itself, in a network of information in permanent symbolic transformation[16]. Calvino (2009, p. 23) says that "Memory is redundant: it repeats signs so that the city can begin to exist", in other words, the city begins to exist in one's memory from the repetition of symbolic signs that give shape and meaning to that memory. The memory of the present is full of associative objects, in an increasingly intense connection between the object and the message, and this intrinsic association on communication finds its way in the Ricoeur's work on metaphor, in which the author says the metaphor explores the figure in the speech, where words bring out an idea or even related feelings which may or may not be physically represented (Ricoeur, 2003, p. 168). Within the discourse, object and message come together as one set of meanings for the message receiver[17], who will go beyond simple perception towards meaningfulness. Taking still Ricoeur's work on metaphor into account, a message is most likely assimilated when it is persistent or highly appealing to the receiver. This is because the message itself relies on codes, that were consciously or not introduced in it, therefore it's up to the receiver to decode the message according to her/his visual and symbolic culture and even to the levels of interaction between the receiver and associated objects; in other words, the symbolic memory will dictate how capable a receiver is in order to decode a message. As American psychologist Jerome Bruner argues that the symbolic memory is built upon sets of meanings that are absorbed from persistent and relevant situations, on which one builds up her/his sense of identity and ownership, but, most importantly, all through the use of language: "*Symbolic* meaning, then, depends in some critical

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[16] This could easily be linked to the relation between mimesis and *muthos* from Ricoeur's work (Farquhar, 2010, pp. 43-44; Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 52-53).

[17] Anyone involved in the message receiving/exchanging process, as a reader or a listener, is to be considered as "receiver".

fashion upon the human capacity to internalize such a language and to use its *system* of signs as an interpreting in this 'standing for' relationship"[18] (Bruner, 2008, p. 89). This relationship and its representation phenomena are easily understood when you think of someone's narrative (a discourse either read or heard) about her/his experience in a place (which usually involves interaction and connections), where its symbolic value is almost part of her/his identity, "when talking about a place, one calls upon its symbolic image and her/his discourse unveils the importance (significance) that is given to the place"[19] (Figueiredo, Trigo, Ferreira, & Mota, 2014, p. 222).

## 2. The memory of news

We relate the facts, but it is society that builds your memory on them. The relevance of the narrated episodes is totally dependent on the public, the viewer who watches the narrative and appropriates the message, but "The way information is disclosed - through verbal or visual language - interfere with its powers of meanings and possible interpretations"[20] (Ayoub, Ayoub, & Oliveira, 2012, p. 16). The message in the journalistic communication is high point of our narrative ability, sometimes acting more powerfully than works of fiction. The plurality of narrative resources and dissemination of news media became a ubiquitous power in all societies developed technologically. If before people gathered around a radio or a person who was reading a newspaper to those who could not read, now under an increasing number of readers and technological resources, you can read the newspaper on your phone, smart TVs, computer, iPad/tablet or even your watch. Faced with this massive coverage of exposure opportunities to the news, an individual can now be more easily affected by the news of a tragedy than twenty years ago, or not. Overexposure to the news made them "trivialized" and "uninteresting", and in this context, tragedies take on the role of the news as a major impact tools in the news.

It's for being so sudden and unexpected that tragedies can capture the attention of all the media. National tragedies can be defined as interruptions of daily life and ordinary daily transmissions. Hence the repeated images, testimonies, interviews and commentaries of tragedies for weeks (Vilaça, 2013, p. 30).[21]

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[18] English version from Bruner, Jerome (1986). Acts of meaning. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, p. 69.

[19] Free translation: "Ao falar sobre o lugar, recorre-se à sua imagem simbólica e seu discurso revela a importância (significância) que lhe atribui."

[20] Free translation: "A forma como as informações são divulgadas – através da linguagem verbal ou visual – interfere em suas atribuições de sentidos e possíveis interpretações."

[21] Free translation: "É por serem tão repentinas e inesperadas que as tragédias conseguem captar a atenção de todos os órgãos de comunicação. As tragédias nacionais podem ser definidas como interrupções de vida quotidiana e das normais transmissões diárias. Daí as repetidas imagens, testemunhos, entrevistas e comentários, durante semanas, de tragédias."

But the news about tragedies are sufficiently able to make a real impact on different audiences? Aren't these public in power to control this impact and decide how it can affect their lives? To reflect on these points, we can refer to Maurice Halbwachs and his analysis on the relationship between collective memory and individual memory, because for him the individual memory is always in need of a collective framework, of a reinforcement of the other to ratify, anchor or build their memories, "we call on witnesses to strengthen or weaken, but also to complete what we know of an event of which we are informed in some way, although many circumstances remain in the dark"[22] (Halbwachs, 1990, p. 18). Now, a reported tragedy does not end its transmission when we turn off the communicator channel (newspaper, radio, TV, etc.) because we can come across a second individual narrative, which have been impacted by the news elect as theme his speech. Here we can resume the relationship previously mentioned by Ricoeur, because even away from the message object, the narrative of the tragedy rescues the individual memory of the news, collaborating in its fixation on collective memory. So we can say that the "object of the memory" turns into the "memory of the object."

The way that the press take over the tragedies to make them a potentiator of their audience opens space for new and intense debates about ethics and memory manipulation. However, reporting a tragedy is not something that evades journalistic ethics, in fact, perhaps inflating the news is directly related to the ethics of the viewer. In this way, we should ask ourselves if we are really being ethical in perpetuating the memory of the tragedy. On the other hand, we return to the importance of the other in the construction of our individual and collective memories. For, as Merleau-Ponty (1991, p. 96) points out, "Express to the speaking subject is to become aware; one does not express to others, one only expresses to know what oneself aims"[23]. As for the manipulation of memory, it should be noted that the setting of the object of the memory is dependent on its seizure by the public. Thus, a well-placed photograph on a striking theme of a reported tragedy, as a victimized child, has great potential to enter the circle Ricoeur called as memory, history and forgetting, in which are discussed the facts, the history and our ability to perceive them as a sad or happy memory, to replicate them in the narrative and fix them in memory (Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 502-505). The impact of the image as an object that illustrates the news today can be reversed to the news that illustrates the object (photo of a tragedy). "Having only an informative text is no longer enough. The shock is in the image. (...) The text has become increasingly an essential accessory of the imagistic potential in the news"[24] (Guedes, Dias,

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[22] Free translation: "Fazemos apelo aos testemunhos para fortalecer ou debilitar, mas também para completar o que sabemos de um evento do qual já estamos informados de alguma forma, embora muitas circunstâncias nos permaneçam obscuras."

[23] Free translation: "Expressar, para o sujeito falante, é tomar consciência; ele não expressa somente para os outros, expressa para saber ele mesmo o que visa."

[24] Free translation: Ter apenas um texto informativo já não basta. O choque está na imagem. (...) O texto tem se tornado cada vez mais num acessório do potencial imagético essencial na notícia."

& Sousa, 2011, p. 9). One of the most recent references is the publication of the tragedy of the refugees, amplified to an international commotion under the great distribution of the image of a Syrian child, Aylan Kurdi, dead on a beach in Turkey. The episode raised many questions among the following reflection: What was left of the news on the refugee crisis? What became more impactful and what has become part of the international news media memory? Would the Europe that met a strong intra-European migratory crisis be facing a new historical chapter in the context of an off-European refugees international crisis?

## 3. The Europe, migrations and refugee crisis

Migrations in Europe are not a particularly contemporary phenomenon. "The population movements, in its various forms (invasions, conquests, colonizations, etc.), are a constant throughout human history and can even say that humans have always been migrants"[25] (DAVIS, 1974, p.96 apud MARQUES, 2008, p.39). However, it was in times of war the Old World met the worst scenarios of refugee mobilizations, with a strong migratory flow intra-European primarily driven by social, economic, political or religious contexts, even revealing a strong weight of illegal migration (Pires, Machado, Peixoto, & Vaz, 2010, p. 34). This context not only obstructs inclusion processes as it adds to the fragility of the States in dealing with migratory masses in contemporary times, being essential the establishment of policy integration.

> Anyway, the aspect of the integration of new immigrants plays a key role in preventing newcomers from entry into criminal schemes and even a fuller acceptance in the host society, which only profits from more effective integration[26] (Guia, 2014, p. 134).

A post-war Europe has worked on the construction of a social identity guided the discourse of equality among people, the balance between plurality of cultural identities and continental unity, but intercultural coexistence has always been a delicate point, because of various ethnic conflicts. It is said that migratory movements are potentially transforming societies, changing the social landscape in the place where migrants arrive and changing the way we see the world (Halbwachs, 2010, p. 101). The construction of social stereotypes about immigrants and contact with their cultures is a danger that "knocks at doors" of countries receiving immigrants. An example to mention are the stereotypes built around the image of ethnic-cultural groups such as gypsies, as pointed out by Silvia

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[25] Free translation: Os movimentos populacionais, nas suas diversas formas (invasões, conquistas, colonizações, etc.), são uma constante ao longo da história humana, podendo mesmo afirmar-se que os seres humanos sempre foram migrantes."

[26] Free translation: De qualquer forma, a vertente da integração de novos imigrantes desempenha um papel fundamental na prevenção da entrada de recém-chegados em esquemas criminosos e até mesmo numa aceitação mais plena na sociedade de acolhimento, que apenas tem a lucrar com a integração mais efetiva."

Gomes in her research on the news of the Portuguese newspapers and the form of discourse on minority ethnic groups. According to her, "(...) even without the nationality of the subject, newspapers often refer to their origin through vast concepts as" African" or "East immigrants"[27] (Gomes, 2011, p. 13).

Although the post-war restructuring and renewal in the social policies, "The mass migrations, that have been reported since the beginning of history, were the most striking phenomena of the twentieth century and have become increasingly a reality in the twenty-first century"[28] (Guia, 2013, p. 30). Wars of this century, particularly in the Middle East, have become associated with a migratory flow of prominent proportions and difficult to control. This is because, added to border control measures and refugee flow, States are faced with ethical, political and ideological dilemmas. "These refugees not only constituted a series of potentially destabilizing humanitarian crisis for neighbouring states, they also raised the question of who was responsible for actually dealing with them" (Carr, 2015, p. 19). The concerns of the States on its borders and its sovereignty are revealed as a constant media topic, denouncing a deep crisis of this nature in the Member States of the European Community. The border control of a territory is directly related to the sovereignty of the State and it was one of the priority items on the European internal security policy in force until 2014, allowing one to decide whether to accept or not the entry of an individual who presented any profiles identified as unwanted at the time (Guia, 2013, p. 29). Given this control, many try to enter the territory by non-legal means, subject to various contexts that often end up aggravating the situation and bringing out different points of reflection and debate on the humanitarian and socio-political aspects.

> Recent measures that are more restricted on the entry of immigrants in Europe have been causing the perverse effect of favouring their illegal entry, eventually finding themselves placed in permanent exclusion on social support, access to health and education[29] (Guia & Pedroso, 2015, p. 130).

It is worth to highlight that, with the group of refugees who are compelled to leave their country of origin, are in addition to other groups motivated by several reasons, but mainly of an economic nature. This group constitutes a critical mass, usually composed of young individuals trying to build life from reported success memories. This aspect

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[27] Free translation: "(...) mesmo sem recorrer à nacionalidade do sujeito, os jornais referem muitas vezes a sua proveniência através de conceitos vastos como "africanos" ou "imigrantes do leste".

[28] Free translation: "As migrações em massa, que têm vindo a ser relatadas desde os primórdios da História, foram os fenómenos mais marcantes do século xx e têm-se mantido cada vez mais como uma realidade no século xxi".

[29] Free translation: As recentes medidas mais restritivas à entrada de imigrantes no espaço europeu têm vindo a provocar o efeito perverso do favorecimento da sua entrada irregular, acabando por se verem colocados em situação de exclusão permanente no que concerne a apoios sociais, acesso à saúde e à educação.

still reflects a behaviour of the contemporary society, consumerist (money-driven) with a strong attachment to the status of "being for having", an artificial scenario that shows how much we live in an age of paradox of "collective narcissism" and contemporary individualism (Lipovetsky, 2014, p. 84). But what would motivate these mobilizations? How its expansion reveals a widely covered social chaos covered as international news? Would contemporary journalism be appropriating itself of the human tragedy or just performing its role of maintaining global society alert to this problem? These are questions difficult to answer and antagonistic points of view. We see more and more of an appropriation of tragedy as the object of the memory of the news in a type of journalism more towards to the sensationalism of the emotions. "While the high quality journalism (hardnews) has as its main guideline focused on rational discussion and criticism, popular journalism emphasizes everyday life and privileges emotions"[30] (Vilaça, 2013, p. 42). On the other hand, as mentioned above, we must consider that we are increasingly immersed in the news of global social problems and this prevents our detachment or moral social blindness.

> Being inextricably tied to human proximity, morality seems to conform to the law of optical perspective. It looks great and thick when near the eye. With the growth of distance, responsibility for the other shrinks, moral dimensions of the object to blur, until both reach the vanishing point and disappear from view[31] (Bauman, 1998, p. 222).

> The refugees crisis in the Middle East reported at the end of 2015, with great attention by the international press, especially on the aforementioned death of Aylan Kurdi[32], was the apex or just another chapter of this drama? Remember that, with title *Muerte las puertas del paraíso*, the Spanish newspaper *La Vanguardia,* September 2, 2000, highlighting the photojournalism of Javier Bauluz, published the shocking image of a dead immigrant, in a Spanish paradise beach, facing the sand and just a few meters from a couple who were sun bathing indifferently[33]. (Carr, 2015, p. 47).

When we find that both publications have become headline news in the international press, we can call attention to some points of convergence and divergence. First, highlighting the bizarre coincidence that both situations were reported on September 2 (with

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[30] Free translation: "Enquanto o jornalismo de qualidade (*hardnews*) tem como principal linha orientadora as discussões racionais e críticas, o jornalismo popular enfatiza a vida quotidiana e privilegia as emoções."

[31] Free translation: "Inextricavelmente atada à proximidade humana, a moralidade parece conformar-se à lei da perspetiva ótica. Parece grande e espessa quando perto do olho. Com o aumento da distância, a responsabilidade pelo outro encolhe e as dimensões morais do objeto se embaçam, até que ambas atingem o ponto de desaparecimento e somem de vista."

[32] http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2015/09/1677028-foto-de-menino-refugiado-morto-na-praia-atrai-atencao-para-crise.shtml.

[33] http://periodistas-es.com/javier-bauluz-muerte-a-las-puertas-del-paraiso-14823.

a gap of 15 years in between them) and, in both photos, the victim faces down the sand, emphasizing the drama of a risky and unsuccessful attempt to cross the ocean. However, age difference emerges as a feature to differ these events, as one victim is an adult man the other one is a child. Would we be more touched by the fact that we may see indifference in the older news or because the newest one is over a very young child? In the face of media ownership of the tragedy, we should analyse the relevance of the image (photojournalism) in the news as an object of the memory and  focus on the question: Was the image is more relevant than the news? Porto Editora held a public vote with ten words and the word chosen for the year 2015 was "Refugee" (Word of the Year, 2015). It is one more evidence of the impact of this issue in the media coverage.

## 4. Data analysis and conclusions

As part of the pilot-study, two semi-structured interviews were taken. In order to observe the importance of an image for the memory of the news, the questions addressed to three dimensions: 1. "Contact with information", which meant to put context to the access and contact with the information in the news; 2. "Information and Memory", to verify how the object of the memory is selected; and 3. "Object of the memory/Memory of the object", which aimed to identify the object of the memory and the relevance of the memory of the object, and from observing the responses, assess the need / justification to prepare a questionnaire to be applied to a wider audience.

In order to observe the "Memory-Object" dimension, were presented to respondents thirteen photographs (labelled A to M), of which only two were not directly related to the refugee crisis of 2015. Of these, one was the image of a child in a Portuguese *bidonville* in St-Denis (Paris suburb, 60-70 years) and the second was the picture of Javier Bauluz, on the news *Muerte a las puertas del paraí*so. Among those who were conveyed to the 2015 refugee crisis were two (in different angles) of the Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi dead on the beach.

The first interview was held with subject EM45, female gender, 45 years old, of Portuguese nationality (born in Angola) and a master›s degree to be completed, and the second interview was made with subject AB50, male gender, age 50, Portuguese nationality (born in Mozambique), with a Masters degree. In terms of the first dimension («Contact with Information»), both subjects said they read news daily said in print and via the Internet, both in national and international newspapers; the individual EM45 affirms that reads mostly in English while AB50 predominantly in French.

For the dimension «Information and Memory», when asked what most drew attention in the news, the interviewee EM45 pointed out that the headline usually calls her attention, but said that she remembered most the headline associated image than the news. EM45 also said that the news that most caught her attention was on the Hungarian journalist who allegedly tripped migrant during a rampage at the border of Hungary and that

she shared the news with friends for feeling shocked by the episode. Furthermore, the subject AB50 highlighted that a headline associated with a good image calls more attention to him. When he was asked about the news that caught most of his attention on the refugee crisis in 2015, AB50 referred to the image of a Syrian dead child on the beach, but he said that did not replicate it for judging it as a tragedy.

To open the third dimension, "Object of the memory/Memory of the object", it was asked which images among the presented ones were related to the 2015 refugee crisis, EM45 said all images were related to the current refugee crisis while AB50, despite initially giving the same answer, began to raise doubts – as it is not a memory test, we passed on to the following question. When asked to ordain the images according to the degree of impact, starting with the one which marked the most, subject EM45 said the photos «G» (immigrant crowd at a border post), «L» (Syrian woman holds a crying child) and «H» (Hungarian journalist allegedly tripping an immigrant) and subject AB50 chose the photos «J» (Aylan Kurdi dead on the beach, in the foreground), «D» (Aylan Kurdi dead on the beach, complete plan with the photographer on the scene) and «H» (Hungarian journalist allegedly tripping an immigrant). When asked about that news that would be associated with these photographs, both respondents had difficulty in presenting the headline or relating to the media that used the image, but both managed to talk about the subject to which those pictures were related.

Finally, while trying to rescue the issue of the refugee crisis in the news of September 2, 2015, specifically on the image of the Syrian dead child on the beach, it was asked if the subjects remembered the news and the child›s name. Interviewee EM45 stated she remembered the related news, also said she had read some information associated with the child›s father, but could not remember the child›s name. The subject AB50 also said he did not remember the child›s name. It is worthy to point out that, at the end of both interviews, after it was explained what each photo referred to, both respondents used the phrase: «an image is worth more than a thousand words».

Both respondents did not remember the news as a whole, but could associate the image to the subject of news, being able to comment on it using their own words. Therefore, we find that the object of the memory (the news) was sublimated by the memory of the object (the image – photograph). Both subjects absorbed the memory of the image, giving it different meanings, according to their interpretations and readings of the episode. This is an indicator of the need to expand the research and amplify the sample, allowing us to check, for example, the importance of image in the construction of collective memory. As for both respondents were able to cite the story that was associated with the image, i.e. the image it is also a powerful way to rescue the memory of the news. Resuming what Halbwachs (2010, p. 18) said about the importance of the testimonies as enhancing memory, also it is relevant to refer Ricoeur (2004, pp. 502-505) on the importance of replicating a positive or negative memory as a way to attach it and give it importance in memory.

It is worth noting that both respondents could not remember the news regarding the photo of Javier Bauluz, on immigrants killed in a paradisiacal beach in Spain, although they recognized that the image referred to the immigrants dead on a beach. Can we infer that the image of the dead child was stronger than the adult man dead on the beach? Or is the memory of the news only weakened by time, since it›s been fifteen years?

Another curious aspect concerns their own national memory about the Portuguese emigration, because neither interviewee was able to recognize what picture «C» (image of a Portuguese child in a *bidonville* in St-Denis, Paris suburb, years 60's-70's) referred to. This photo was taken by Geráld Bloncourt and, among other from his collection, it was in the publication «Por uma vida melhor» (Portuguese for "For a better life") (Bloncourt, Vieira, Cardoso, & Caille, 2008).

The two interviews, as part of a pilot study, led not only to check the relevance of the dimensions highlighted in the interview guideline, but also offered subsidies for the development of new dimensions and categories of analysis. The results confirm that the memory of news related to the crisis of refugees reported on September 2, 2015, was influenced by the images associated with them, so that the object of the memory (news) was fully converted into the memory of the object (images).

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