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Media representation of migration between pseudo-truth and privacy: journalistic narratives in Italy

Abstract

The article investigates the relationship between media, social networks and migration phenomena in Italy starting from the most controversial case in the last years of chronicle of waves of immigration on the coasts of southern Europe. I refer to the controversial publication of the photo of the Syrian child, Aylan Kurdi published the 2nd of September 2015. That image of lifeless baby, which ended up on the front pages of newspapers around the world, and that is now a faded memory, opened the discussion on the ethical obligations enshrined in the Charter of Treviso (protection of Childs in journalistic activity) and the Charter of Rome (deontological rules in migration correct information), both signed by Italian journalists. After quite ten years the migration narrative remains anchored to the same anxiogenic tone of a permanent emergency, so people's perception of the phenomenon continues to generate fear, racist hatred. The data of the yearly Italian and EU reports on migration representation through the media show that we assist to a deep -rooted perception based on the distortion of reality that marks the victory of the algorithm and reiterates the strong penetration of the disinformation system.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migration runs through the entire history of the twentieth century and lands in the twenty-first century with the force of the push that comes from poor countries and wars across the Middle East, Asia, and Africa confronting with the pervasiveness of the media, which from information tools have become relational environments, transforming us into connected publics (Boccia Artieri, 2014).

In this sense, the issue and its conveyance through the media, the narration of facts and people are now more than ever an element of sociological investigation because they propose continuous examples of emotional rather than factual representation. The use of increasingly shocking images, the same ones that bounce through communication nodes, tend to provoke conflicting emotional reactions and

generate fears rather than serious and in-depth reflections on the reasons that generate a phenomenon that has taken on the dimension of an exodus.

We live in a noisy environment where the flow of messages is continuous and incessant and consists at once of those we receive and those we ourselves produce, the power of the click. We are immersed in this universe where the flow of words, images overwhelm us even when we think we are protagonists. We have lost the ability to go deep, the time of rationalization, intellectualization. A problem that does not arise today and that appears as the consequence of the birth of the industrial society at the beginning of the twentieth century. In this sense Weber wrote:

It is the fate of our age, with the rationalization and intellectualization inherent in it, and above all with its disenchantment with the world that the very last and most sublime values have withdrawn from the public sphere to take refuge in the otherworldly realm or in the brotherhood of immediate relations between individuals. It is not accidental that our highest art is intimate and not monumental, nor that today only within the smallest communities, in the relationship between man and man, in the pianissimo, pulses that something which corresponds to what once pervaded like a prophetic breath, in the form of a raging flame, the great communities and held them together. (Weber, 2004, 43).

The concept of the ethics of responsibility introduced by Weber at the beginning of the twentieth century still assumes relevance today, particularly about the figure of the journalist, to the need for a renewed role of intermediation between the fact and its narrative.

A role that is more necessary in the attempt to inform and make understood increasingly complex dynamics that involve multiple spheres and are configured in a definitively global dimension. The who and what to show, the where, when and above all the why, represent questions to which correspond answers that are each the result of decisions that the journalist makes in increasingly compressed time frames.

The ability to assess the consequences of one's decisions is more necessary today in the digital society where opposing forces, in a framework shot through with fragilities, are part of those factors that fuel the growing migrant crisis that continues to press on the so-called Western world. As Castells introduces in relation to the construction of the self in the information society:

The emergence of religious fundamentalism seems linked to both a global trend and an institutional crisis. We know from history that ideas and beliefs of all kinds are always there, ready to catch fire under the right circumstances.

Significantly, fundamentalism, whether Islamic or Christian, has spread, and will spread, globally at the very time when global networks of wealth and power are connecting nodal points and valuable individuals across the planet, while disconnecting and excluding large segments of societies and regions and even whole countries. [...] There seems to be at work a logic of exclusion of the excluders, redefining the criteria of value and meaning in a world where there is less and less room for the digitally illiterate, non-consuming groups and under-communicating territories. When the Net "deactivates" the self, the self, individual or collective, constructs its own sense of self without global or instrumental references: the process of disconnection becomes reciprocal, following the rejection by the excluded of a unilateral logic of structural domination and social exclusion (Castells, 2002, 25).

In the communication-dominated society we face the paradox of disconnection, the non-communication that continues to generate excluded people who escape fundamentalism, poverty, wars, and economic exploitation.

2. Media Deontology

In the chronicle that offers us the daily accounts of the landings, the recoveries off the coasts of Greece, Turkey, Italy, the deaths, the endless lines of men, women, children and the elderly pushing at the barbed-wire borders of Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia; the story of the publication of the photo of the body of Aylan Kurdi in 2015, the three-year-old Syrian boy found dead on a beach in Turkey, stands out as the most controversial case in the narrative of the waves of immigration on the shores of southern Europe.

The question of ethics is, of course, intrinsically linked to the ethics of the profession, as it was introduced in the first part of this reflection. The question has been raised in many sides as to whether the publication of the image of the child's body lying on the beach, used by many newspapers, on the front page, or on the inside pages, as by: El Mundo (Spain), Le Soir (Belgium), Irish Examiner (Ireland), Publico (Portugal), The Independent (Britain), and in Italy by Manifesto, Mattino and La Stampa; really represented the only way to draw attention to an unprecedented crisis. Some argued that without that image there would not have been the decision of some European countries to open their borders, yet after the emotional reaction all the contradictions and resistance in the management of this humanitarian crisis that shows no signs of defusing, remained evident and unresolved.

The Italian Order of Journalists has over the past two decades endowed itself with a series of deontological protocols addressing different issues, most notably in

1990 Italian journalists signed the Treviso Charter. The deontological code of ethics for a culture of childhood, which in Article 7 states, "in the case of sick, injured, disadvantaged or troubled minors, special care must be taken in the dissemination of images and stories in order to avoid that, in the name of a pitying sentiment, sensationalism is achieved that ends up becoming exploitation of the person." And in Article 11: "all journalists are required to observe these rules in order not to incur the sanctions provided for in the law establishing the Order."

Precisely that article refers to the risk of sensationalism in the name of a feeling of piety, and this brings us back to the issue of credibility and the consequent risk of manipulation of public opinion. The media influence individuals, their way of interpreting reality and forming an opinion as Gili argues, "The complexity of media influence lies in the fact that they always present-often inextricably-the two dimensions of informational and normative credibility: on the one hand they inform us about the world, and on the other they always propose 'worldviews,' ways of presenting and judging events, people, problems." (Gili, 2001, 77-78).

The way the message is presented, the symbols it evokes can create the conditions for manipulation. Gili refers to the creation of a psychological, emotional climate that invokes a specific symbol, resulting from the manipulation of the message that leads to a manipulation of the social context. (ibid., 31)

Migration shows us multiple critical aspects, a high level of complexity of its narrative, the reporting if not accurate can generate altered or biased worldviews.

Defining the geopolitical, cultural, and social framework is crucial for a correct representation. In this framework in 2008 the Rome Charter, a specific protocol to guide the narrative of migration phenomenon, was drafted and signed, inviting Italian journalists to: take the utmost care in the treatment of information concerning asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants in the territory of the Italian Republic and elsewhere, and in particular to: (a) adopt legally appropriate terms always in order to return to the reader and user the maximum adherence to the reality of the facts, avoiding the use of improper terms; (b) avoid the dissemination of inaccurate information [...]; protect asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants who choose to speak to journalists, adopting those precautions regarding identity and image that do not allow for the identification of the person, in order to avoid exposing them to retaliation against them and their families [...]; d) consult, when possible, experts and organizations specializing in the subject, in order to be able to provide the public with information in a clear and complete context, which also looks at the causes of the phenomena.

The drafting of codes of ethics represents, in the intention of the promoters, a need to respond to the evolution of the social and cultural as well as regulatory framework and to provide professionals with tools and rules that enable them to properly manage the organizational process, newsmaking, that underlies the production of information, in order to avoid unintentional distortions or manipulations. This is an inherent criticality of the media system if, as revealed by sociological studies that have analyzed the evolution of newsmaking, "the rules of practice (working rules) that preside over the selection of news, themselves contain an implicit ideology, a worldview. (Golding, 1981, 75 ff. in Gili, 2001, 186). This means that the rules are not neutral, the way they are applied creates symbols and assigns a certain value to the news, the character of newsworthiness, which takes into account certain factors such as: the character of negativity and drama; the size of the event and the number of people it involves; the personalization of political and social processes; and the fragmentation of reality. In particular, this last character is significant in understanding how central the role of deontology is.

In the process of information production, the world must be transformed to fit the logic of the media and at the same time meet the expectations of the audience.

Thus, events are de-contextualized, i.e., removed from the context in which they occurred, isolated from their meanings and causes, to be arbitrarily re-contextualized in a new frame - the media format - on the basis of associations and relations wholly extrinsic to them (Altheide 1976, 24-28). [...] This particular structure of information not only does not allow us to understand the developments of events, their antecedents, contexts, and the scenarios they open, but also prevents us from understanding their logic and direction. (Gili, 2001, 191).

3. Social fragility and the impact of migration representation

The above introduction opens an additional issue: the inability to understand its logic and direction of the information is what fuels the flow of misinformation that individuals undergo. Gili and Maddalena (2018) identify three factors that help define the profiles of individuals most likely to succumb to the "allure" of misinformation. A first factor concerns the fact that "those who 'want' to believe fake news are more likely to believe, since in that news-even when it is suspicious or blatantly false-find confirmation to their previous ideas, opinions, and beliefs (Gili, Maddalena, 2018, 12)." The second factor is that of self-referentiality, "in some ways opposite to the previous one,[...] which stems from the fact that we are usually unaware of the influences we are subjected to. We are therefore inclined to believe and prefer to believe that others are more vulnerable than us to deceptive and manipulative messages (ibid., 12)." The third factor concerns the attitude that fake

news very often stimulates, namely that "Fake news in fact lends itself perfectly to feeding conspiracy theories that losers can resort to in order to justify their own inadequacies and defeats" (ibid., 12).

The framework that turns out appears as particularly complex, the structure of fake news, the attitudes of individuals in these new contexts are grafted into a deeply fragilized social dimension. This seems to be a consequence of the crisis of social organizations, social movements, and political parties, which has made individuals weaker. They feel their social role less and leaving prevailing individualism they become increasingly locked into the experience of the self as externalization. Added to this is the general crisis of the media system, the increasingly click-friendly technology that has revolutionized the way we communicate. Journalism today is going through a deep crisis that has become more and more acute and that the advent of social media has made more evident, further fragilizing its mediating role and contributing to the proliferation of distorting processes of representation of reality.

The formation of social networks on the web, which are nurtured and find their own dimension within contexts of false mobilization, represents one of those elements that are contributing to undermining the relationship between media and public opinion, just as it is happening for politics and institutions as a whole.

In this sense migration has proven to be a topic capable of responding perfectly to the need to feed the frame of fear that creates consensus and thus power over public opinion and that can generate manipulatory processes. In fact Italian media, by proposing flow accounting, showing landings and reception centers, associating those nameless faces with countries traversed by war and terrorism, associating albeit indirectly the economic crisis with migrants who are trying to enter Europe, emphasizing facts of widespread petty crime involving foreigners, are all useful elements in delineating a very precise framework, capable of generating an attitude of fear and insecurity that in some cases evolves into hostility and violence toward those who are perceived as "intruders" who disrupt our relative security and threaten our well-being.

A representation that has not lost its negativity even during 2020, the year of the pandemic, as is analyzed extensively in the 8th Rome Charter Report ¹:

¹ VIII Rapporto Carta di Roma, (2020), Notizie in Transito.

Those who arrive from the sea used to be just illegal immigrants; now they are infected, potential infectors illegal immigrants. Covid-19, in journalistic language, has engulfed the migration theme and transformed it in its image, without altering its negative value. But even journalists have a choice to write what they see or what politics asks them to show. Life, real life, continues to remain in the background. Reception is still an issue of no interest. Instead, landings remain at the center. The numbers, which are statistically insignificant, do not matter. [...] The distorted and distorting narrative about migration reaches paroxysm on social media. Migrations here are dismissed in four words. If predefined roles are played on TV, social seems instead to be spaces where everything is allowed, where there is no control and no sanction. Reflection has even less space. (ibid, 1)

The data emerging from the surveys show us the migration narrative continues to leverage using terms that fuel fear and rejection, feeding the hate speech. The term clandestine, considered legally wrong by the Rome Charter, continues to be widely used in headlines, showing the highest trend in the past five years (ibid, 5). Just as is continued to be used a language that depersonalizes migrants "described as plural entities," narrated as commodities to be moved and placed elsewhere that dehumanizes the narrative of the phenomenon. (ibid, 7)

As Bauman states:

We fear what we cannot handle. We call such inability "misunderstanding": "understanding" something is in fact the knowing how to deal with that very thing. The knowledge of how to deal with something, that understanding, is a "free gift" offered along with the tools with which one can perform that treatment, indeed embedded in them. As a rule, such knowledge comes a posteriori: it requires, one might say, first of all the tools, and only then is it established in the mind through reflection on the effects of their use. In the absence of the tools and the practices they make possible, such knowledge or "understanding" is unlikely to appear.

Understanding arises from the ability to manage. What we are unable to handle is "unknown" to us; and the "unknown" is scary. Fear is another name we give to our defenselessness (Bauman, 2006, 119).

Fighting fear requires the ability to manage, to handle information, to have the cultural tools that make people understand. If partial information, misinformation prevail, the representation of migration remains something other than us, it does not promote questioning, it does not make us overcome the barrier constituted by the imaginary of the immigrant and make them a real person to us.

Above all, it does not show us the interdependencies that bind us to them. It does not explain to us that the widening economic gap between the North and South of the planet is the trigger for migration flows, that the economic exploitation from which our Western society benefits is the cause, that the same technology that has opened us to almost infinite possibilities is the same technology that shows the existing gap and motivates those people excluded to try not to be excluded anymore.

Wars, disrespect for human rights in many countries, and dictatorships continue to drive families, young people, women, and children, to flee in desperate search of a future to escape persecution and death. The phenomenology of the migrant as a representation through the media is what, in Castells' view, determines an excess of anxiety in the environment that undermines the capacity for learning, "the situations that awaken fear are those that draw the largest audience (Graber, 2007: 267). These are reactions to events that threaten survival, and these reactions mobilize cognitive resources that activate attention. [...] News (and particularly images) can operate as sources of stimuli equivalent to lived experience" (Castells, 2009: 193).

Thus, highly dramatic, decontextualized images elicit emotions in the audience and influence their decisions. Public opinion-building processes are thus altered by changing the way consciousness and knowledge act. Consciousness because it operates on the processes of the mind and knowledge, acquired through consciousness because it increases the individual's ability to process events and construct increasingly complex mental models. A fundamental aspect in the digital society, characterized for a continuous and increasing flow of information that forces in a continue effort to understand, so individuals are pushed to metabolize and eliminate what is deemed as unnecessary or an obstacle to one's survival and well-being and that by consequences contributes to define social behaviors.

Precisely in relation to the ways through which social behaviors are realized Castells recalls Damasio's studies aimed at demonstrating the prominent role of emotions and feelings in social behavior. "Experimental research shows that the operation of these emotions can be related to specific systems in the brain. The six basic emotions are: fear, disgust, surprise, sadness, happiness and anger. Species or individuals that are not equipped with the correct emotional perception system have a low chance of survival. Emotions are perceived in the brain as feelings.

[...]Feelings result from emotionally activated changes in the brain, which reach a level of intensity sufficient to be processed consciously." (ibid.,173).

In this sense, the path for identity construction is transformed into a self-representation to gain the consensus of its audience. The imperative is not to be

excluded; critical consciousness is threatened by the need to be accepted and live in conditions of a false security.

4. How the concept of privacy evolves

We are individuals immersed in medial environment that prominently represent our experiential context based on which we construct our identity.

A social process in which self-representation becomes a succession of events that create a disconnect between who we are and what we represent about ourselves. In this context, the concept of privacy has completely changed.

Indiscretion becomes news, and the speed with which information travels has compressed the time for verification to the point of almost nullifying it.

It becomes clear that we are faced not so much with a new defined relational model as with the spread of a set of relational practices that are changing the way we represent ourselves, inform ourselves, and communicate. The figure of conversation seems to have made all kinds of content circulating on the net informal and confidential. The resulting construction is forcibly much more tied to emotionality than to rationality, we rely on the degree of trust we give to the one or those who share the content with us, the speed and breadth with which what are then identified as rumors propagate, shows us the superficiality with which we act in these relational spaces, but at the same time it also shows us the extraordinary potential they have, a strong democratization of relationships and knowledge. What in the twentieth century was owned and managed by a few who could decide what to communicate and what not, today is bypassed by the network and can become participatory content from below, capable of approaching Lévy's utopia and giving life to what he theorized as the model of collective intelligence. (Cava, Pira, 2015, 55)

This evolution has an evident impact on the narrative of migration phenomena. A narrative where images without any filters prevails, showing faces of people who for different reasons flee from situations that are in any case complex if not dramatic. This depersonalizing approach could endanger them as well as their own family members who may still live in their countries of origin. Similarly, rumors, testimonies if not properly argued can violate the privacy of these people creating discriminatory assumptions that could hinder their inclusion in our context. This is the paradox that the excess of information may create, due also to power of crossmediality that migration narrative seems able to generate.

In general, as Morozov argues the excess of information conveyed instead of representing exercise of freedom can become the tool to target weaker segments of the population or minorities.

It is not only emotionalism and speed that threaten the integrity of political decisions. It is also the increasing availability and mobility of information. [...]Technology can work wonders during natural disasters. [...]But the reason many projects that rely on user input produce reliable data during natural disasters is because they are apolitical events. [...]The problem when using these crowdsourcing tools for other purposes, such as documenting human rights violations or monitoring elections, is that the accuracy of such reports is both impossible to verify and easy to manipulate. After all, anyone can send deliberately erroneous messages to accuse their opponents of some misdeed or even worse to sow panic in their ranks. [...]Nor do we want some information related to human rights violations to be publicly accessible on the Internet. (Morozov, 2011, 257-258)

The flow of information through social media, as Morozov points out, shows us how the 2.0 information model moves on a dual track. On the one hand, the thinning of physical and cultural barriers can help raise awareness and emergency situations and spread democracy. On the other, the enormous amount of information if not controlled can at the same time undermine the security of individuals and of segments of society.

5. The spectacularization of a phenomenon and its consequences

The issue of deontology and the way migration is portrayed are closely related to the risk of spectacularization of the news. We show bodies, we violate the lives of people - men, women and children - we are not engaged enough in telling the facts and narrating the context.

The images, the image itself, spreads exponentially. The fact does not turn into news, it immediately becomes a "media event" spectacle. The narrative of the fact is replaced by opinion, the contours become blurred, and indeterminacy grows, generating insecurity and fear.

The survey conducted by DEMOS.IT in 2015 showed quite clearly the consequences resulting from the weakening of deontological rules, the fragilization of the concept of privacy and the prevalence of the spectacularization of the news.

Immigration creates unease, concern. The title of the survey was clear: "We welcome but not in my home. Two-sided Italy with immigrants."

In the survey conducted several years later as part of the European Security Observatory in May 2020, it is noted that the trend regarding fear toward immigrants has not undergone significant changes from 2008 to 2020.

Similarly the evidence that emerged in the XLVI Observatory on the Social Capital of Italians - Lexicon of the Future (06/2015), showed us how:

"The issue of immigrants, more than others, appears, instead, to be a divisive topic. On the border between integration and closure, Reflecting the fears raised by globalization. Of the world looming over us. And threatening us. In the language, the asymmetrical representation of recent years is repeated. Between expectations, value references. And, distant and distinct: the actors whose responsibility it is to implement them. On the one hand, the promised reforms, models and expected value references. And, on the other, the institutions, the political and representative actors who should implement them. Lost, the latter, in the Dis-Incanted Valley."²

Seven years later, the 14th edition of the Report on Security and Social Insecurity in Italy and Europe, highlights how fear remains central, and while immigration is not the main disquiet for respondents, the dimension that fears replace fears remains.

Today, however, the issue of insecurity appears even more prominent than in the past. And more "disturbing." Because, as has been said, in recent years we have gone through - and are going through - the "Time of the Virus." A time that has distanced us (from each other), loosening personal and social ties. And it has changed our relationship with institutions, politics and democracy. However, if the fear of the Virus, in recent months, seems less heavy, it is because, in the meantime, we have witnessed (literally: live) the irruption of war. To the Russian invasion of Ukraine. That is, not very far from our borders. And that has fueled our sense of insecurity. We have, therefore, gone from one fear to another. In just a few months.

And, even more so, in a few years. In this regard, one need only look at how limited, today, the concern about immigration appears to be. And crime.

"Foreigners," in particular. In the recent past, they were among the most impactful issues, in social perception, giving a face to our fears. Whereas, today, they

² Diamanti I, OSSERVATORIO CAPITALE SOCIALE - 46 - LESSICO DEL FUTURO. Quarterly national observatory in collaboration with Coop (Ass. Naz.le consumer cooperatives). Civic sense, altruism, solidarity and other behaviors attributable to the concept of "social capital." Demos - Coop survey, May 2015, sample 1417 cases. <http://www.demos.it/a01136.php>

involve and disturb smaller fractions of citizens, not only in Italy. They are, however, latent issues, always on the agenda. They continue to be talked about. And they may return to the center of public attention. Because they touch popular sensibilities. As has been the case for many years. At this stage, however, the problems they generate greater. (Security Report, 2022, 5)

The 10th Rome Charter Report is of particular interest in this sense, because it traces an analysis of the evolution of the migration narrative from 2013 (the year the first report was published) to 2022. In particular, the migration agenda in the decade 2013-2022 highlights how the dominant themes-Migration Flows, Crime and Security, Reception-which in the overall news and years occupy 81 percent space.

The thematic category Migration Flows is undoubtedly the main one. It accounts for 37% of news in the 10 years considered, fluctuating 23-48% and exceeding 40% in 5 out of 10 years. The category shows an interesting trait of continuity over the years: it predominantly refers to the news of landings, that is, it emphasizes arrivals by sea, while neglecting other routes of entry of migrants into our country. It is precisely this dominance of landings, with ships full of migrants becoming a media icon of the phenomenon, that depends not so much on the numbers of entry into our country, but on other concomitant factors, which can be hypothesized here:

- the political factor:
- the greater "evidence" of the phenomenon and its "concentration" in easily documented episodes (as opposed to the lower visibility and greater dispersion in space and time of regular entries);
- the stronger impact of images and the greater newsworthiness of the travails of sea voyages and their sometimes fatal outcomes;
- the peculiar characteristics of these types of arrivals, which are perhaps of greater concern than others because they bring to Italy the most desperate, the poorest, those with the heaviest burden of otherness;

News in this category often has an alarmist-emergency component, and it is legitimate to think that their recurrence contributes to amplifying the perceived dimensions of the migratory flow. (X Report of Rome, 2022, 24-26).

A portrait emerges of fragile societies as the common trait of major European countries, shot through with fears, anxiety, and a growing feeling of intolerance that social media fuel through the systematic proliferation of disinformation.

6. The frame of fear through media and social media

The social context we are observing shows us quite clearly how "the world seems to have become flat again, like a background or a written page. It is no more than a text, a montage of signs as weak, as less directive as possible"³. We are witnessing the thinning of the line between the inner man and his social behaviors; the individual's path of identity construction is centered on the representation of the self through social media and the consensus he is able to obtain from it. It is in fact the evolution and exaggeration of the basic concepts of consumer society, as we mentioned above. The correspondence between supply and demand is no longer about the relationship between subject and object, but the subject becomes the object the moment it gets likes. In this sense, the principle of mass self-communication introduced by Castells is distorted; the individual network node does not seem to be able to bring about social change and give rise to new community contexts. Instead, we witness the proliferation of groups, tribes with weak ties represented by the almost obsessive search for consensus even through the instrumental use of false or mystifying content.

Into this framework comes the general crisis of the media system; the rapid spread of social, increasingly click-friendly technology has revolutionized the way we communicate and relate. Journalism today is going through a profound crisis that has become more and more acute and that the advent of social has made more evident, further fragilizing its mediating role and contributing to the proliferation of distorting processes of representation of reality.

Platformization contributes to altering the information environment, conveying disinformation and fake news, to promote skepticism and distrust with the aim of polarizing public opinion formation processes, fueling populist drifts and undermining democratic processes of participation. We are witnessing the profound transformation of society, in which we see the progressive weakening of institutions, the loss of representative role as intermediate bodies of political parties, the mediatization of public opinion-building processes, all of which are profoundly destabilizing individuals.

We are witnessing the development of a new relational dimension. The conveyance of content access to information occurs in a digital dimension, where it becomes the object of discussion and sharing with one's network, which can no

³ It is useful to recall the Touraine's theory regarding the mirage of absolute modernity. (Touraine, 1992, 317 - 320)

longer be configured simply as a virtual environment but now plays a central role for individuals in their own system of social relations, representing the community of reference.

Factual reality and its representation are defined through the circulation of information to which is attributed truth value because it comes from the members of the community to whom credibility is accorded deriving precisely from the relationship constituted within the network. Representation prevails over factual reality; we are now beyond Baudrillard's definition of hyper-reality. Baudrillard believes that the boundary between reality and its representation is being thinned, through media representation, going so far as to argue that it is shaped even determined by the media, thus giving rise to "a world in which the ultimate guarantor of authenticity and reality is precisely the passage into television or other media, which makes that world 'more real than the real'" (Giddens, 2013, 285). The digital society has surpassed and almost annihilated the mediating role of journalism: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, are the new venues for narrating reality or what is believed to be reality. We have entered the era of post-truth, misinformation, fake news, alternative truths, proliferate on social media, around them groups and communities are built and strengthened that are characterized by polarized worldviews. As a group of researchers have verified in recent studies:

“Digital misinformation has become so pervasive in online social media that it has been listed by the WEF as one of the main threats to human society. Whether a news item, either substantiated or not, is accepted as true by a user may be strongly affected by social norms or by how much it coheres with the user’s system of beliefs (32, 33). Many mechanisms cause false information to gain acceptance, which in turn generate false beliefs that, once adopted by an individual, are highly resistant to correction”. (Del Vicario et al, 2016, 558)

It is the same mechanisms by virtue of which individuals interpret reality and define their beliefs that guide the internalization process that is part of each person's path of identity construction.

It is the capitalism of likes that abruptly declare the positivity of our existence and even of our wills, which are guided by the illusion of wanting and desiring, while alternatively there is no negativity given but, if anything, a nonexistence. New power. The power of mind control is the viral control that through virtuality caresses us benevolently and suggests what it deems convenient; The new power does not observe, the new power records. (Han, 2015)

The control of information flows, their transformation and re-posting in the nodes of the Net, according to predefined logics by the actors of digital capitalism, shows that there is a design that tends to create asymmetries in access to knowledge. This occurs because individuals appear less and less able to decode information flows and messages. This appears as a pivotal element of the reflection, how those who hold the power of data can decide a unilateral way what constitutes knowledge, what learning underlies the ability to make decisions (Pira, 2022). If, as Han argues, "in hyper communication everything is mixed with everything. Even the boundaries between inside and outside become more permeable. Today we are completely externalized into a 'pure surface of absorbing and reabsorbing networks of influence'" (Han, 2016, 50). In this sense, the path of identity construction is transformed into a self-representation that makes us feel part of the network. The imperative is not to be excluded, critical consciousness is threatened by the need to be accepted and live in conditions of false security.

7. Social media misinformation

There are seemingly random, fortuitous, and totally unpredictable movements, changes and shifts of what for lack of a more precise term we call "forces of globalization." They are unrecognizably and without warning alter the familiar landscapes where we used to cast the anchor of our enduring and reliable security. They reshuffle individuals and ruin their social identities. They can turn us, overnight, into homeless vagabonds with no fixed address or identity. [...] If currently there is no subject, we talk about with more solemnity or pleasure than "networks," "connections," or "relationships," it is only because the "authentic stuff"-the tightly woven networks, the firm and secure connections, the all-around relationships-has in practice crumbled. (Bauman, 2008, 92)

In an extremely fragile social context where the pressures to shut down and fears continue to increase, Social Networks represent the "Safe Garden."

The place where we give life to the representation of the self as a public event, we share with direct connected publics (friends, followers, etc.) and indirect publics (friends of friends, etc.) that social identity that precisely through connection and representation we seek to strengthen and keep alive. Social networks are becoming our "safe garden" under the push of the big players who are constantly providing us with new APPs that give us the feeling of "tailor-made." Marketing pushes mix with the opportunities that social can offer, not only "safe garden" but also "places of experimentation."

The Internet and social therefore can also be a resource in understanding what lies behind the migration phenomenon as long as we have the tools to

understand, once again research shows the juxtaposition between opportunity and risk, between education fragilization of individual morality and the prevalence of a relational environment conceived as a closed circle that leaves out those who do not think as we do appears as a consequence of that process of fragmentation of the narrative that is also fragmentation of our living. A living constructed by frames, images, posts, and messages that attempt to reproduce reality according to models that we follow in order to feel part of what we consider a whole, but which is only a part. This is how definitions like multiculturalism become empty of meaning unless as Bauman indicates we agree to change our perspective.

“The "transition" between distinct identities no longer needs a limbo, an "in-between" territory that keeps them apart; the shift in mindset no longer requires brainwashing. People of different denominations, sometimes with sharply contrasting beliefs, can no longer ignore the real presence -- all too real -- of each other, can no longer barricade themselves to exclude face-to-face encounters, and we can/need, must/can't avoid talking to each other. We have abundant opportunities to glare at each other and fight; but we also have opportunities to avoid shooting”. (Bauman, 2015, 146)

The reduction of linguistic codes, however, opens up a new critical dimension, that of a diminished ability to understand the real. This raises a question as to how the concept of informational credibility is modified, if on the one hand we have a narrator who uses increasingly reduced and less clear language, the simplification and immediacy of the symbol is not in itself exhaustive of the expression of the concept, and on the other hand an audience less capable of critical interpretation. We find it useful to revisit the concept of credibility in this regard. Informational credibility is the credibility attributed to the "narrator" or witness who stands as a mediator between us and the facts, the events being reported.

The rules of marketing and successful word-of-mouth among audience members are the key factors in influencing others. On social, it only takes a few clicks to express our thoughts in a post, comment or on our personal status, and we can also make use of images to do so. Our contacts, friends on Facebook or followers on Instagram, follow us and based on the content we post they know everything about us. In short, we entrust our days to a "virtual plaza."

The only certainty we have is that now without technology we seem to have lost the ability to express ourselves; it follows that even culture is in danger of being generated only through technology.

In this view, culture is not a fixed and immutable heritage, but a set of socially and historically situated processes (Paccagnella, 2010, 114), which develop within

each person's daily practices and consequently, express shared meanings and values.

Now, everyday practices invoke the ability to construct meaning through the use of different communicative codes, partly learned, partly as a result of body language. Technological consumerism leads to shrinking the time and space for learning. We use pre-packaged, manufactured codes, thus the intensive use of these symbols, with obvious limitations.

Certainly, if communicative codes are media products created by platform developers it skips the process of "decoding," as defined in Hall's (1973) model of encoding-decoding.

We are again faced with an exercise in simplification and homogenization of linguistic codes, which collides with the complexity of decoding processes with unpredictable outcomes.

8. Conclusion

At the end of this analysis on the perception of security and its representation, some aspects of relevance stand out. We have described the feeling of insecurity that runs through European society and Italian society. The result was a picture from which it became very clear how emotions are now prevailing in the interpretation of facts and in the processes of constructing public opinion. This led us to analyze how the media system has evolved, underscoring the growing crisis of Italian journalism and the loss of credibility and reputation of the traditional media, which has been grafted into a broader crisis that is affecting institutions, governments and the foundations of democracy as we had experienced them at the turn of the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first.

The role of the State as it was theorized in modern society according to the classics of sociology (Durkheim, Weber, Pareto, Marx) "the State is commonly accorded a central role as the regulator and guarantor of the exercise of citizenship rights vis-à-vis citizens, organizations, and civil society in general, toward which it establishes a substantially asymmetrical relationship. This asymmetry is in fact an expression of a society that is gradually invested by the process of division of labor and functional specialization, with consequent differentiation of tasks and in various spheres of work and non-work life." (Ducci, 2017, 20). Well, the role of guarantee has been diluted and at the same time the asymmetrical relationship has also entered a crisis in the face of the breakdown of the process of division of labor because of globalization and a different organization of tasks and competencies. The

state seems to have lost the ability to give answers in a prospective and strategic key, bound to the search for consensus in electoral terms.

Here, too, we are witnessing an evolution in the use of the factoid scheme and its ability to influence and distort the reality of facts with reference to wartime conflicts as the ideal theater:

[...]for the flourishing of this form of lying: the confusion generated in such contexts, coupled with the difficulty for impartial witnesses to gain access to the theater of events, favors the possibility of boasting victories that were never achieved, of attributing atrocities to enemies that negatively affect public opinion, often making use of the "evidence" of cleverly falsified photographic or audiovisual images. Alongside this first core is a much broader area that encompasses all the different forms of falsification and omission of information, united by a certain degree of intentionality in wanting to conceal or distort the truth of the facts. (Gili, Magdalena, 2018, 4)

The same process taking place in the representation of migration where there is the constant alteration of reality. Thus, a manipulation takes place that has profound effects on the cultural and cognitive models of individuals by distorting the mechanisms for building trust and credibility. The representation of the migratory phenomenon becomes part of this process by spreading a feeling of insecurity and rejection of migrants among citizens.

This has a direct consequence on communicative and relational processes in an inherently mediatized society that is giving rise to a complex interweaving of interference between the media system, institutions and social networks that can produce manipulative actions through the conveyance of false or distorted information. Thus, the false and biased representation of the migration phenomenon feeds the frame of fear and with all evidence deeply conditions society and individuals, who find themselves squeezed between the continuous flow of news and an unscrupulous use of some specific keywords and, politics that in the obsessive search for consensus, in the face of a credibility crisis, exploits fear as an element to exacerbate the opposition between different ideological positions.

Online news extends its influence more by its ability to intercept the workings of networks than by the intrinsic quality of its news value. It is clear, then, that the quality of format and news makes a difference. The media must be able to offer different formats and depth of content than those circulating online. Quality makes the difference. And quality is a value. Readers have also changed profoundly in the communication ecosystem. Increasingly accustomed to frequenting social networks and having to deal with a constant bombardment of news. Therefore,

today it is critical to bring media closer to targets that are becoming increasingly distant. To succeed in capturing targets in the marketplace, managing the different platforms available becomes strategic. Content construction is a matter of flow. A process that happens especially when you must fight fake news. It is not enough to refute fake news, but it becomes functional to trigger a series of positive information on the same topic, helping to build a counter flow of information to run on all available platforms (Pira, 2020).

Technology can play a positive role as a facilitator and tool for societal growth, but media technology has transformed society into a media society, and the production of communication technology is increasingly concentrated in the hands of large players: from Google, to Facebook, to Microsoft, to Apple. The data presented show how much social networks are present in our lives. One of the aspects that makes this field of research particularly complex is related to the economic implications that social relationships bring.

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