

CAPÍTULO 32

MIGRANT EFFECT ON MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA: FEARS, POPULISMS AND UNTOLD INCLUSIONS.

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Resumen

How the migration narrative has changed? But above all, how the phenomenon has evolved. In previous works (Pira, 2011, 2012, 2017) the reflection started from the impact that the increase in migratory flows towards Europe had generated on the perception of the phenomenon in Italian and European public opinion. In the wake of the emergency, the issue of migration had strongly entered the agenda setting and the political agenda with a direct impact on the public debate oscillating between the frame of fear and that of emergency. The most serious consequence is that the debate has turned into a mere contrast, becoming the perfect paradigm of the effects of polarization and of distorting informational cascades. The media coverage of politics has made it clear that there is a closed relationship between information and politics (Habermas, 1962). Where politics is told through information, while the latter not only fails to affect its own story but manages to make its dog-watching role emerge with increasing difficulty, partly overwhelmed by the ongoing disintermediation processes (Morcellini, 2011). From 2013 to the present, the year of the explosion of the migration crisis, the media have only proposed the accounting of flows and any news stories related to migrants, while the integration processes have not yet been investigated. The story of what happens after the landing and of the actors who are responsible and who take charge of managing the reception and integration phase is almost totally missing. Not even the reception facilities of the Church manage to bring out their own story, overwhelmed by the feeling of rejection that seems to have taken root in a significant part of Italian society. And this while Istat photography shows a situation where almost two hundred different communities live together, with data that show how immigrants have often arrived directly, with different levels of integration depending on age and cultural level and the presence of discrimination. on various levels (Istat, 2018). Starting from these elements it is clear that there is a wide field of investigation that must be addressed to analyze the results obtained in terms of assistance and inclusion processes so that these elements also become part of a wider and more complete public debate in able to affect public opinion capable of weakening those flows that continue to feed the frame of fear.

Palabras clave: migration, disinformation, inclusion, social media, propaganda.

Resumen en español

¿Cómo ha cambiado la narrativa de la migración? Pero, sobre todo, cómo ha evolucionado el fenómeno. En trabajos anteriores (Pira, 2011, 2012, 2017), la reflexión comenzó a partir del impacto que el aumento de los flujos migratorios hacia Europa había generado en la percepción del fenómeno en la opinión pública italiana y europea. A raíz de la

emergencia, el tema de la migración había entrado fuertemente en la configuración de la agenda y la agenda política con un impacto directo en el debate público que oscilaba entre el marco del miedo y el de la emergencia. La consecuencia más grave es que el debate se ha convertido en un mero contraste, convirtiéndose en el paradigma perfecto de los efectos de la polarización y de la distorsión de las cascadas informativas. La cobertura mediática de la política ha dejado en claro que existe una relación cerrada entre la información y la política (Habermas, 1962). Donde la política se cuenta a través de la información, mientras que este último no solo no afecta su propia historia, sino que logra hacer que su papel de vigilancia de perros emerja con mayor dificultad, en parte abrumado por los procesos de desintermediación en curso (Morcellini, 2011). Desde 2013 hasta el presente, el año de la explosión de la crisis migratoria, los medios de comunicación solo han propuesto la contabilidad de los flujos y cualquier noticia relacionada con los migrantes, mientras que los procesos de integración aún no se han investigado. Falta casi por completo la historia de lo que sucede después del aterrizaje y de los actores responsables y que se encargan de gestionar la fase de recepción e integración. Ni siquiera las instalaciones de recepción de la Iglesia logran sacar su propia historia, abrumados por el sentimiento de rechazo que parece haber arraigado en una parte importante de la sociedad italiana. Y esto mientras la fotografía de Istat muestra una situación en la que casi doscientas comunidades diferentes viven juntas, con datos que muestran cómo los inmigrantes a menudo han llegado directamente, con diferentes niveles de integración según la edad y el nivel cultural y la presencia de discriminación. en varios niveles (Istat, 2018). Partiendo de estos elementos, está claro que hay un amplio campo de investigación que debe abordarse para analizar los resultados obtenidos en términos de asistencia y procesos de inclusión, de modo que estos elementos también se vuelvan parte de un debate público más amplio y completo en capaz de afectar a la opinión pública capaz de debilitar esos flujos que continúan alimentando el marco del miedo.

Palabras clave: migración, desinformación, integración, redes sociales, propaganda

1. Introduction

The progressive crisis of values is contributing to the weakening of the European identity and bringing about the evident emergence of an individualistic and self-representing component of society. The crisis of social organizations, of social movements, of political parties, has made the individuals who perceive their lessening social roles, weaker, thus they withdraw evermore into themselves as exteriorization. This general weakening gives rise to fear and violence, because the individual feels left alone and perceives everything not under control as dangerous and insidious to his own status. Groups whose objective is the defence of their own borders, whose members often tend either to keep their imaginary prevailing over reality or making realistic image according to their own needs and expectations are created more frequently.

It is clear that in a society so weakened and with a fragile national identity, today at the mercy of sovereign and populist pressures, the understanding of the migration phenomenon and the capability of reading reality encounter obstacles that are difficult to overcome, especially if migration represents one of the items most conveyed by the disinformation industry. In this sense the data published by the AGCOM Observatory in February 2019 show that in the period January-August 2018 among the 30 most recurrent terms in the disinformation sites, the words migrants and immigrants had over 10,000 occurrences. To this we can add that on a sample of 1,358 individuals aged between 14 and 74 representing the Italian population, it appears that: considering the issues relevant to the EU identified by Eurobarometer, immigration is indicated among the 3 most important by almost 60% of citizens. The issues related to the country's economic situation and unemployment follow with shares close to 50%. These data set, collected in the period that preceded and followed the electoral campaign for the Italian general elections until the launch of the European campaign,

shows a political communication strongly centered on emotivism. Messages constructed to exploit the power of the algorithm, to modify the perception of reality, alter the cognitive bias on the basis of which individuals define their own cultural frame of reference and attribute truthfulness to the contents to which they are exposed. It is quite clear that if representation prevails over the reality of facts in a media-driven society, we trigger a mechanism in which the imaginary prevails over reality. In this sense the process is charged with an emotional content that threatens to alter one's understanding.

An exploitation that benefits from the weaknesses of the information system. In fact if immigration covers 25% of the disinformation offer, while it represents only 9% of the journalistic information one, the imbalance, associated with the viral force of the disinformation system, produces profound consequences on the processes of public opinion building.

After all, as already mentioned in other works (Pira, Altinier, 2018), modernization has led to the prevalence of democracy in the economy over the democracy of culture, transforming it into a mass industrialized market of culture, thus subtracting tools to the ability to interpret reality and reducing more and more the space for the creation of a collective culture in favor of a "cultural" consumerism (Bauman, 2015). Individuals take refuge in echo chambers, groups and environments where they meet only with other individuals who tend to be already aligned on the same opinions, so the de-ideologization of society has led people to search for new points of reference. Thus, the fake news, as the most evident manifestation of post-truth (Gili, Maddalena, 2018) thanks to their ability to spread in digital environments, are the most evident demonstration of how confused the margin between fact and opinion is now. The result is that the public receives information and, even if this does not correspond to the reality of the facts, but it is consistent with the idea that the individual has developed himself, he shares it.

2. The distorted Migration Representation

We have indicated above what are the elements in function of which the fake news are so effective in penetrating and persisting in the Net, but these are not sufficient to make people understand why individuals believe in false news.

The picture is particularly complex, the structure of the fake news, the attitude of individuals are grafted into a social dimension that is deeply fragmented as a result of the crisis of social organizations, social movements, political parties that has weakened the individuals who feel less their social role and they close more and more in the experience of the Self as an exteriorization. Added to this is the general crisis in the media system, the increasingly click-based technology that has revolutionized the way we communicate. Today, journalism is undergoing a profound crisis that has become increasingly acute and that the advent of social media has made more evident, further weakening its mediation role and contributing to the proliferation of distortive processes of representation of reality.

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

The digital society has overcome and almost annihilated the mediation role of journalism: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, are the new places of narration of reality or of what is believed to be reality (Pira, 2017). Even the data that emerged from the sixth Report on the application of the Charter of Rome published in October 2018, outlines a precise picture of the way in which the migration question finds representation through TV and printed paper.

Therefore the perception that generates fear makes manifest the dichotomy between the real country and the perception that citizens have of it. An altered representation that clashes with the photograph taken by ISTAT and contained in the report on the condition and social integration of foreign citizens residing in Italy in 2018, which analyzes from different perspectives the presence of foreigners in the country: "5,144,440 foreign residents, equal to

8.5 percent of total Italian citizens, with an increase of less than 10 thousand compared to the previous year. Feeding the number of foreigners in Italy there are not only migrations from abroad, but also the many born in the country from both foreign parents, the so-called second generations” (Istat, 2018: 18).

An evident contradiction, the reality represented by almost 10% of the Italian population made up of foreigners living and working in the peninsula and the imagery of an invasion of potential terrorists and criminals who threaten the security of the lives of Italian citizens. But the data also show that there is a progressive slowing down of the presence of non-EU immigrants since 2011 in relation to the requests for permission in the face of a growth in the number of non-EU foreigners due to the acquisition of Italian citizenship. And still in the total of foreign residents 30% come from the European Union as a whole of over 200 nationalities (Ibidem, 2018: 20).

The phenomenology of the migrant as a representation through the media is what, in Castells' vision, determines an excess of anxiety in the environment that compromises learning abilities. So images with a high rate of drama, de-contextualized, arouse emotions in the public and influence their decisions. Thus the processes of construction of public opinion are altered by modifying the way in which consciousness and knowledge act.

3. Conclusions

We have described the feeling of insecurity that runs through European and Italian society in particular. A framework from which it emerged with great evidence how emotions are now prevailing in the interpretation of facts and in the processes of construction of public opinion. This led us to analyze how the media system has evolved, stressing the growing crisis of journalism and the loss of credibility and reputation of traditional media, which has been grafted into a wider crisis that is sweeping institutions, governments and basics of democracy as we had lived at the turn of the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. This has a direct consequence on the communicative and relational processes in an intrinsically mediated society that is giving life to a complex interweaving of interferences between the media system, institutions and social networks that is able to produce manipulative actions through the transmission of false or distorted information.

Thus the false and partial representation of the migratory phenomenon feeds the frame of fear and clearly conditions in depth the society and the individuals, who find themselves crushed 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 crisis of credibility, exploits the theme as an element to exacerbate the contrast between the different ideological positions. So, cross-mediality becomes an element that promotes the rooting of polarized opinions that are consolidated thanks to a communicative construction focused on the feeling of fear. Moreover, the emotional component is also pervading the areas of political communication in which it has taken on an increasingly important aspect (Cepernich, Novelli, 2018), particularly in relation to those "political" discourses that have seen the prevalence of positions connected to the anti-politics. A process that began over ten years ago with the first internet election campaigns until the last European elections. The populist language has become deeply rooted in bringing out a public ignorance (Morcellini, 2011). Thus the process of building public opinion focuses on the concept of silence of citizenship (Pira, 2012) which has turned into non-participation and increasingly episodic participation. In the media-driven society where the plurality of media and information sources had contributed to the affirmation of democratic societies, through the main function of the journalistic system of conveying facts and controlling power, it became a society that shows all the signs of a profound disintegration, in which the core values of democracy seem strongly threatened. Politics is losing its ethical dimension to slip towards a logic of the exercise of power also using the use of communication strategies focused on the manipulation and construction of alternative truths. We are facing a challenge of global relevance that must be realized through a new autonomous construction

of meaning (Castells, 2009). A process that is possible only if the relational dynamics and the construction of comparative skills on different opinions can prevail over the perverse dynamics arising from the distorted use of confirmation bias and the hyper-generation of polarizing effects.

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