Communication Pathologies and Human Rights: Understanding Crimes of Peace

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Abstract
With breaking news and tweets of sinkings, rescues, rejections, deaths at sea, naval blocks very often one has the perception that everything has already been said and written in the vortex of institutional and non-governmental communication on the theme of migrants.

In Italy, in particular, the situations listed above, which still fill the media agenda and remain trend topics for weeks on social networks like Twitter and Instagram, are not only ideological and / or symbolic, but also material and too often categorized with the expression "war crimes", when more correctly that sinking or that naval blockade should be recognized as a "crime of peace": it’s necessary overcome this pathology in communication /information and return to reconsidering human rights, talking about "migrant democracy".

Keywords: digital communication, migration, crimes, peace, intercultural media, migration

1. Introduction

Generally, the awareness of a multicultural reality has unfortunately too often led to the formulation of ethnocentric models and strategies of defense and safeguarding of one's own culture and of the identity of the group to which one belongs.

This corresponds to the activation of a mechanism of negation of the ‘Other’ based on the concept of "diversity". Furthermore, the globalization of markets has encouraged the formation of a network of relationships that has brought with it the lack of consolidated and secure reference points, generating a strong sense of loss from which the fears and insecurities of a "society born liquid" (Appadurai, 1996).

In the old and new media they have undergone an amplification and increasing thematization.

This aspect has accompanied the history of mankind and has always been characterized by movements of individuals, groups and cultures triggered by changes of a political-economic, religious-environmental nature.

The difference between political refugee and economic migrant, the theme of nostalgia and belonging, security and the enhancement of difference are aspects that characterize the European public debate and beyond.

However, the consequences of the phenomenon of immigration go well beyond the political agenda, as they influence the nature and character of a national culture thus seriously challenging borders and identities.

Policies to respond to the phenomenon of migration are usually accompanied by problems whose etiology varies and are often addressed differently, as already demonstrated by the tragic episodes in the Parisian banlieus or the attack on the London underground in the same year (Appadurai, 1996).

The recent Islamic terrorist attacks in Europe have certainly not helped to diminish the dangerous rhetoric of fear and threat, which is understandable if one thinks of living in an era of global terror, but it is a counterproductive as it reproduces the logic of difference, instead of overcoming it.

Even today in the Italian media political landscape, for example, we are still witnessing a criminalization of the
foreigner.
These tensions are observed in the media: they clearly show the future of public culture and the civil arena, a culture that will be marked by diversity and contrasts and the result of these tensions will produce decisive moral and ethical effects.
The means of communication are the mirror of the diversity inherent in the European social fabric.
The media online and offline are not limited to reproducing this diversity, but actively contribute to its proliferation (Silverstone, 2007).
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2. Media and Migrants in Italy
In Italy, in particular, the situations listed above, which still fill the media agenda and remain trend topics for weeks on social networks like Twitter and Instagram, are not only ideological and/or symbolic, but also material and too often categorized with the expression "war crimes", when more correctly that sinking or that naval blockade should be recognized as a "crime of peace".
Over time, the peace crimes system has sought different forms of legitimacy.
It describes itself as inclusive, but delegates to the border and traffickers the selection of existences. It is liberal, but liberalizes everything except the mobility of people.
It stigmatizes irregular flows, but does not replace them with regular entries, giving vigor to the grammar of the uncontrolled invasion, it saves human lives when it wants or can, but rejects and holds people (note 1).
Franco Basaglia (1924-80), in addition to being remembered as the architect of the closure of psychiatric hospitals in Italy, was the first to adopt the expression "crimes of peace".
This was the title, among other things, of an important collection of essays on the control of life and poverty through conformity and medicalization (note 2), focusing on how this concept offers an analytical key to all institutionalized violence, which serves as a strategy of social conservation, of order and existing power relations.
These crimes involve citizens and non-citizens in a grey area between war and peace, crime and legality, which gradually leads us to become accustomed to accepting disorder, violence and cruelty as the "norm of the life of peace" (note 3).
They reflect, both at sea and on land, those policies that often err in their exclusive attention to physiology, as if this pit is sufficient for the human condition.
Thus, the scenario we are facing shows, on the one hand, media narration and different, apparently abstract statistics of rescuing migrants at sea, on the other hand, armed forces that regulate access and exit from borders and the internment of as many human lives in African or European territory.
Once again we are faced with a clear paradox: we try to legitimize every form of treatment of the migrant as functional to the policing element of national sovereignty, holding the "guest" as a destabilizing foreigner.
The case of Libya perfectly demonstrates the above mentioned fact.
Most of the migrants who leave the Libyan coast arrive in Italy with the injuries of forced labor, deprivation, sexual abuse and the murders of which they are often witnesses (note 4); a physical and psychological violence already perpetrated on the Libyan territory even before embarking on the long sea routes in the boats.
Furthermore, following the signing of the "Memorandum di intesa" a document on cooperation in the field of development and the fight against trafficking in human beings by the former President of the Italian Council of Ministers, Paolo Gentiloni, and the President of the Presidential Council of the Libyan Government, Fayez al-Sarraj, in February 2017 in Rome, the Libyan territory still presents itself today as a fragmented country, with a local economy based on corruption, trafficking and smuggling (note 5).
What we are witnessing is the trampling of the most basic human rights that unites with the evident inadequacy of the Libyan coast-guard and the obvious impossibility of obtaining humanitarian protection in Libya; all this is done also in the name of the protection of migrants and the fight against the traffickers of men, but then clashes with the will and the
(very few) testimonies of those same surviving migrants who rarely, once in Italy, can be heard inside of the media space, despite being people who more than others should have a say (Albahari, 2017).

Therefore, "hosting" does not always mean opening up to the other, constructing an empathic communication or an open and objective narration. Hospitality "as a crime" is a phenomenon which is not only found in countries such as Libya, Egypt, Afghanistan, Iran, whose faces of violence and criminality are now visible also in their economy and political organization, or in the Mediterranean, which in 2017 recorded the deaths of more than 15 thousand migrants, but also on the Italian territory.

3. Crimes against Hospitality

Foreigners in Italy who inhabit the territory in an undocumented way are called "clandestines"; this term derives from clan which means "hidden", so those without a passport or identity card thus become illegal and irregular (note 6).

Perhaps since "hidden", does the clandestine deserve to be imprisoned in a place, in turn hidden, labelled as illegal, apparently an enemy and passed off as a criminal?

This is the question that the philosopher Di Cesare (2014) poses in his Italian work called “Crimini contro l’ospitalità” where he describes in detail the life of foreigners within the CIE (Identification and Expulsion Center) of Ponte Galeria in Rome.

The foreigners, who are judged illegal on the basis of the crime of clandestinity introduced in Italy on 15 July 2009 ("Bossi-Fini" law), are interned within the identification and expulsion centers. This law was repealed on 2 April 2014 making the offence an administrative offence, but expulsion and punishable re-entry into the country became law.

The CIE of Ponte Galeria is the largest in Italy with a capacity of over 354 places (176 men and 178 women) but for safety reasons the structure is intentionally unused. According to data in 2012 from the State Police, 2,124 immigrants were interned (1,529 men and 595 women) from different countries such as Pakistan, Ukraine, Senegal, Serbia and Egypt resulting in a Babel of languages, religions and cultures.

Many are former prisoners, victims of trafficking and exploitation, people fleeing conflict, drug addicts or survivors of torture and persecution, but once inside the CIE no distinction is made between immigrants and refugees, or between those who have just arrived or those who have long resided in the Italian territory.

Neither are the individual stories of each individual nor their various problems taken into account: not only are they irregular but would-be potential offenders, if some of them have already committed crimes; it thus becomes much easier to criminalize all the internees in the eyes of public opinion inside the CIE, more over, there is no internal regulation.

Those who are interned do not know what they can or cannot do, what rules they must respect, but above all they do not know their rights and therefore can not defend themselves nor make complaints or appoint lawyers, lodge requests for asylum (note 7).

In 2005, in a report called Temporary Presence, Permanent Rights, Amnesty International denounced the violence and abuse suffered by inmates where excessive and humiliating use of sedatives and tranquilizers, insufficient health care, physical assaults by public security agents, lack of hygiene and communication with the outside world are just some of the facts that emerge. Yet, paradoxically, the ministerial language speaks of the internees as "guests".

Di Cesare (2014), in this regard, speaks of CIEs as "modern total institutions", enclosures that give to those who are enclosed a sub-human aspect, highlighting the concept of "zoologization of human beings" that can be defined as a strategy to offend humanity, to make humans beasts, erasing the unmistakable and irreplaceable accent of each one, or worse still, as the reduction of life to its radical nudity, where the victim is lost in the fragile network of symbolic identifications until the dissolution of his individuality, that is to become an exponent of a species.

In his critique of the nation-state, Hannah Arendt (2009) has shown how the homogeneity of the nation, which wants to define citizenship through birth and which the State strives to represent by eliminating any heterogeneous residue, produces stateless persons and refugees, no-persons expropriated of the right to membership; in this way, the human rights doctrine designed to work within a single state and in the complex treaties between the different nation-states is lost (note 8).

The juridical inexistence of the immigrant automatically decrees social inexistence by rejecting it in a non-place in an extra-territoriality from which they can disappear at any time without anyone actually noticing.

Every desire to exclude the Other repeats the ancestral ethnocentric gesture in which we find represented the "wild
thought"; when the human species is classified in a hierarchy, the door opens to the dehumanization of the "irrecoverable", of those sub-men, reduced to beasts (note 9).

If there is therefore a savage, claims Di Cesare (2014), this is the racist who stiffens the unit, naturalizes the differences and irreparably divides humanity); the invention of inhumanity has never ceased to exert its efficacy and racism, in its elusive unseen forms, seems to reoccur, continuing to discriminate but not "in the name of race", but in terms of "rejections" and the "necessary" return of immigrants to their countries of origin.

This metamorphosis is evident where the principle of biological inequality is replaced by the argument of the difference between cultures and the clash of civilizations.

The reported scenario seems to indicate the entry into a post-racist era and the birth of neo-racism: "cultural racism" (or neoracism), based on the categorization of cultural traits (customs, language, religion), tending to replace the concept of race with that of ethnicity, or, even more generally, of "cultural differences" (note 10)

This approach originated in the second half of the 20th century, following the growing stigmatization of "classic" biological racism, based on the direct association between natural attributes and intellectual or moral characteristics.

Since it is no longer possible to promote these forms without being the subject of heavy criticism, it was necessary to reformulate, mask this theory, adopting as a yardstick the concepts of "ethnicity" and "culture", used essentially as a racial euphemism.

"Implied racism" (note 11) theorizes the total incommensurability between different cultures, seen as monolithic entities that have no possibility of communicating with each other and must not come into contact, nor mix together; fostering a formal respect for diversity, one therefore supports a policy of mixophobia that considers the foreigner a threat, an unassimilable and undesirable entity.

Among the causes of this phenomenon, there is "the obsession with downgrading", the fear of seeing the disappearance of differences between one's status and that of the "inferior" ethnic group on the social scale, guilty of "sucking in" the natives and striking their "ethnic honor" (note 12).

Faced with these new forms of more subtle and elaborate discrimination, the main risk that presents itself today in our society is a "commemorative antiracism" that guards an enemy who is no longer there, using outdated criteria as the yardstick of judgment based solely on biological differences (note 13).

4. Conclusion

There is an urgent need to re-think new political and communicative strategies on the issue of cultural difference and international migration, but above all (re)cultivating a culture of hospitality is a priority, supported by a culture of listening and co-inhabiting the globalized world.

Hitlerism left behind the idea that one can choose with whom to cohabit, but obviously this can not be a choice; before making any social pact each of us is bound to "others" never known, on which his very existence depends (note 14).

You can not pretend to know and own a certain space, then choose with whom to live within it and to build your own identity. In a 2.0 society that has made connection and relationship the key words of the new forms of participation and communication offline/online, the prefix "co" about the word "co-habitation" must be considered in its deepest sense: not only as union or closeness to the other, but also as simultaneity.

Cohabitating means rather to share that spatial proximity in a temporal convergence in which the past of each individual can articulate itself in the common present in order to find the consonance of a common future: a future founded on the ability of listening to the Other who shares with me the same spaces (note 15).

The first step, says the philosopher Chul Han (2017) is to "welcome" the Other, that is to approve the Other in their otherness, the second, is to offer listening, so that the Other can speak so as to open the space of their otherness: welcoming in a hospitable way "is an inspiration, but it does not annex the Other, but it guards and protects"

Hospitality and listening constitute a solid basis for a society of listening and attention that gives rise to a kind of time, the "time of the Other for the Other" (note 16) which establishes new forms of communitarianism, not tribal, therefore based exclusively on connection, on a culture of contact, understood as the way to overcome false communication and false democracy, able to recognize the dignity of difference.

But perhaps this will not be entirely sufficient.

The alternative to crimes of peace and those against hospitality is no longer to be sought exclusively in rescues, in
greater humanity or only in new strategies of intercultural communication, but in more justice, starting from the assumption that injustice is such when there are viable alternatives or to some extent already existing options.

New practices of "migrant democracy" are emerging that are based on a broader and just policies able to break the supposed consensus around the crimes of peace: already in 2015, in many documents published by Frontex and Europol, it was highlighted how the combating of illegal immigration is considered a key instrument for maintaining an area of peace, justice and security for European citizens (note 17).

The Interior ministers of countries such as Austria, France and Germany have recognized that the "porosity" of the Mediterranean Sea is being exploited together with the threat of international terrorism. Yet what about the solidarity initiatives with migrants in ports, railway stations and border crossings where citizens, local institutions, secular and religious associations offer smiles and material aid on a daily basis, outside the policing mechanisms of the so-called hotspots?

What we are witnessing is, on the one hand, a new form of tribalization that refuses hospitality, contact with the Other, with the foreigner, nourished by a strong perception of insecurity and by confused media narration that does not inform, but, it forms "tribal minds". On the other hand, a sustainable democracy is being activated that is renewed precisely on the basis of the existence and needs of migrants, in the attempt to combine inclusion and democracy, social intimacy and shared citizenship.

The "Migrant Democracy" is the new socio-political and cultural condition in which to invest, a new concrete practice, a horizon to be pursued, able to create paths of local citizenship and transnational solidarity within a broader economic and political vision of participatory democratization.

References

Notes
Note 3. Ibidem 
Note 7. Ibidem
Note 8. Ibidem
Note 9. Ibidem
Note 13. Ibidem
Note 15. Ibidem
Note 17. http://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/38038