Article

BETWEEN CULTURAL MOSAICS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES. ATTEMPTING TO BUILD A MODEL OF INTERCULTURAL PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

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Abstract:

Introduction: There is still too often a tendency to consider issues related to culture and cultural diversity as mere narrative objects rather than as complex communicative content, which is fundamental to the care of the institutional public sphere. **Objectives:** The aim of this article is to reflect on these simplifications and to go beyond common views and binary narratives of (public) discourse. **Methodology:** Through a background and descriptive analysis of the literature on the topic, we will question how public administrations can best implement social inclusion initiatives. A general definition of Intercultural Public Communication (CIP) will be proposed, highlighting current critical issues and future challenges. **Results:** the relationship between communication and the migration phenomenon and the more general challenges of interculturality lead us to reflect on another often underestimated (or even neglected) aspect, namely, how public administrations can best implement social inclusion initiatives. **Discussion:** Greater attention to intercultural integration on the part of territorial authorities can be a fundamental opportunity to adopt targeted communication strategies aimed at informing citizens and meeting their needs through communication channels that are accessible to all. **Conclusion:** In media and

political circles, the logic of sharing and showcasing can not only highlight the existence of altruistic personalities within institutions, but the digital space itself seems to be open to altruistic values and creative media practices.

Keywords: media and transformation literacy, cultural field, digital communication, intercultural communication, public administration.

ENTRE MOSAICOS CULTURALES Y PRÁCTICAS INSTITUCIONALES. INTENTANDO CONSTRUIR UN MODELO DE COMUNICACIÓN PÚBLICA INTERCULTURAL

Resumen

Introducción: Todavía se tiende con demasiada frecuencia a considerar las cuestiones relacionadas con la cultura y la diversidad cultural como meros objetos narrativos y no como contenidos comunicativos complejos, fundamentales para el cuidado de la esfera pública institucional. **Objetivos**: El objetivo de este artículo es reflexionar sobre estas simplificaciones e ir más allá de las visiones comunes y las narrativas binarias del discurso (público). **Metodología:** A través de un análisis previo y descriptivo de la literatura sobre el tema, nos cuestionaremos cómo las administraciones públicas pueden implementar mejor las iniciativas de inclusión social. Se propondrá una definición general de Comunicación Pública Intercultural (CIP), destacando las cuestiones críticas actuales y los retos futuros. **Resultados:** la relación entre la comunicación y el fenómeno migratorio y los retos más generales de la interculturalidad nos llevan a reflexionar sobre otro aspecto a menudo subestimado (o incluso descuidado), a saber, cómo las administraciones públicas pueden aplicar mejor las iniciativas de inclusión social. **Discusión:** Una mayor atención a la integración intercultural por parte de las autoridades territoriales puede ser una oportunidad fundamental para adoptar estrategias de comunicación específicas dirigidas a informar a los ciudadanos y satisfacer sus necesidades a través de canales de comunicación accesibles para todos. **Conclusiones:** En los medios de comunicación y en los círculos políticos, la lógica de compartir y exhibir no sólo puede poner de relieve la existencia de personalidades altruistas dentro de las instituciones, sino que el propio espacio digital parece estar abierto a los valores altruistas y a las prácticas creativas de los medios de comunicación.

Palabras clave: alfabetización mediática e informacional, ámbito cultural, comunicación digital, comunicación intercultural, administración pública.

Introduction

In the current panorama of communication, the effort that institutions should make would be to overcome the current "public-intercultural communication," which tends to reduce complex issues that concern entire societies, such as "immigration," "race-ethnicity," "conflict-integration," to the sphere of political-journalistic communication alone, i.e., to selectively isolate and analyze the public and institutional communicative dimension of some phenomena. "Intercultural public communication" is the assumption that phenomena involving different languages and subjects are essentially newsworthy political issues and that the factors of the communicative sphere are central to the explanation of each individual event, starting from its media representation.

However, it would be wrong to think that the roots of xenophobia are predominantly media related. It is true that in modern history, governments, democratic or otherwise, have repeatedly resorted to the press and the mass media to spread feelings of insecurity or fear among the public to strengthen consensus and political command centers, as the entire literature on moral panics demonstrates.

Nevertheless, does this prove that the reality constructed by the media always goes far beyond empirical reality? As Barisione (2020) points out, there is a risk that this kind of sectoral, even "corporate" framing of reality could quickly turn into a form of epistemic short-sightedness and, therefore, disciplinary obtuseness if it is not accompanied by an adequate epistemological awareness - of the limits of any cognitive enterprise and of clear and balanced public communication by local and national institutions, free of any political party ties.

In this sense, rethinking citizenship and human rights today also means rethinking the function of the media and public communication from an intercultural perspective, and it is possible to extend this reflection within and beyond the political-communicative environment.

The issue of cultural coexistence with and within institutions is much more complex; it is not just a question of language or respect for cultural and religious practices. It is about the daily lives of subjects, relationships, norms, rights, and cultural-institutional contexts. It is about understanding the needs, emotions, conditions, and useful tools of an important part

of the world's population and developing common policy strategies to avoid forms of abuse and surveillance.

We live in a world populated by strangers who are different from us, but where, paradoxically, what we have in common with the other is difference. For centuries, we may have been able to hide and remove this plurality. However, current global communication processes require the discovery of otherness. The problem, as will be discussed later, is that while the public narrative shows us the difference outside and inside the screens, it is unable to provide us with adequate tools to understand it. Very often, local and national institutions fall victim to media frames, political polarization, or complex administrative-bureaucratic procedures that hinder the construction of an intercultural public sphere from within.

Certain media and institutional narratives/visions have, over time, generated hostility and indifference, reactions that the sociologist Silverstone (2009) calls 'strategies of removal.' The time has come to build a moral public space, including, but not limited to, information.

The text has attempted, on the one hand, to redefine the most common interpretive frameworks used to deal with the intercultural issue and, on the other hand, to offer readers new perspectives for public communication and understanding of the complex issue of cultural diversity by institutions, without forgetting the important role played today by new information technologies and the tortuous nature of the path to protecting the freedom and dignity of all human beings.

The need of an alien subject to be informed, as well as to maintain a link with his or her origins, translates into useful strategies to try to escape invisibility, to participate in collective life and to communicate with institutions, supported by traditional and digital means of communication, although often with unsatisfactory results.

The pandemic has reminded us that we live in a highly interconnected and interdependent world. However, it is in instability that the value and strength of relationships, solidarity and cultures are measured. When there is a lack of harmony in society, cooperation and respect for fundamental rights are the first victims (Buoncompagni, 2022). Local realities present different structural problems, the effects of some policies adopted at national or European level often produce unexpected or even disastrous results.

For example, the recent health crisis was a risk factor for the well-being of migrant populations in Europe, not only in terms of possible exposure to the virus but also in terms of possible adverse health outcomes associated with barriers to accessing health services.

Particularly at risk are those living in overcrowded conditions, with difficulties in self-isolation and maintaining social distance (e.g., in reception centers), or in conditions of poor hygiene. Migrant groups and minorities differ in their access to knowledge and information, as was the case during the COVID-19 period. In the case of total closure, some did not have the necessary socio-economic or technical means (such as access to the Internet) to "take care" of themselves and their families during the period of isolation.

In view of the health and economic crisis that has emerged in recent years, we can perhaps say that two developments seem (still) possible: a widespread increase in protectionism and anti-immigration policies or greater solidarity and cooperation at the international level between different peoples and institutions at all levels.

These new interventions are and will undoubtedly be the responsibility of global institutions. However, to limit new forms of discrimination and promote social policies that consider the complexity of today's societies, a new model of public communication seems necessary (Bennett *et al.*, 2011; Binotto *et al.*, 2016). An institutional form of communication that not only places the citizen and citizenship at the center of the public interest but, first and foremost, knows the citizen. This means knowing how governments should interpret the symbolic, identity, and cultural aspects of peoples and promote respect for them through an intercultural and institutional dialogue based on a precise model that will be theorized in this article called in this study "Intercultural Public Communication (IPC)."

The guiding question for this analysis will be: What is intercultural public communication (IPC)?

It is difficult to construct a specific definition that applies to every context and social situation, but in general terms, it is any activity aimed at communicating messages and information from public administrations (or other bodies providing public services) to users of those services, which must be received, interpreted, and understood by another individual belonging to a different culture.

As society changes at a rapid pace, so do interest relations, relationships and trust-building processes between administrations and citizens. But today, more than ever, even at a theoretical level, it is important to have a point of reference, to trace a path, to elaborate a model-paradigm to understand how this relationship changes, and to reconstruct its communication of an institutional nature.

1. The intercultural public sphere

Culturality is not something objective; it is a feeling that passes through people when they meet those who belong to a world considered "elsewhere."

Today, the public sphere is being redefined above all by the new digital technologies, which represent the socio-economic condition of migrant subjects and give meaning to their mobility, create unprecedented conditions for experimentation with forms of identity, favor experimentation with new forms of media action and intercultural sensitivity between migrant and host societies, between social and virtual spaces.

These conditions form the basis for trying to identify and define a possible transnational digital public sphere (Habermas, 1999; Ducci, 2001, 2007), in which media use and content define a new communicative environment in which it is possible to draw on specific identity resources, promote the interaction of different cultural experiences and create new forms of narrating diversity and otherness. The relationship between third-country nationals and the host society is based on the latter's ability to guarantee migrants opportunities to participate in the social, cultural, civic, and economic life of a country, but this "pact of reciprocity" requires, on the other hand, that immigrants actively participate in the integration process, respecting the values and norms of the host culture, without giving up their own identity.

The definition of "integration" proposed by the European Commission is that of a two-way process based on mutual rights and obligations. The main objective is the harmonization between different cultures and what is defined by the term "cultural integration," an expression that does not indicate a point of arrival but rather a path made up of active and progressive measures aimed at improving the competencies (skills, citizenship rights, awareness of one's own cultural identity and, therefore, of one's own values and history) of a minority in the host country (Wolton, 2009; Ducci, 2012; Musarò & Parmiggiani, 2014).

For the purpose of avoiding any form of discrimination, it is essential to identify the cultural-philosophical background that drives a precise model of integration and has important socio-legal and economic consequences.

For example, is the immigrant a guest worker or a new member of society who should benefit fully from the host society's social system along with other citizens? And does the host society derive its practices from a universalist or ethnocentric worldview?

Over time, contemporary societies have adopted different solutions to the problems of intercultural relations, solutions that social scientists have defined using the term 'models' (Zincone, 2009), but since the end of the 1980s, numerous studies have repeatedly highlighted the failure of these theoretical models regarding the problem of integration and the lack of effective social policy strategies. The main reason for this seemed to be the implementation of policies based on trial-and-error interventions or the abstract configuration of such models, which were not suitable for application to contexts that were destined to be constantly changing.

In this regard, the strategies most often mentioned by scholars, whose debate is still rather fluid and open, are "assimilationism" and "multiculturalism," which, with their specific implementations and their variations in non-homogeneous contexts, have resolved to a small extent the problems linked to cultural integration, while at the same time aggravating others.

In the first case, the model provides for a direct integration strategy aimed at the individual.

More precisely, the aim is the complete adaptation of the new subject, the adaptation of the migrant person to the culture of the host society through the assimilation of symbols, meanings, lifestyles, and social relations; in this way, however, the migrant is de-socialized in terms of internalized norms and values and is re-socialized according to the rules and expectations of the society that welcomes him in an all-encompassing way (Zanfrini, 2011). Accepting the destructuring of the original culture makes room for learning the new culture through a scheme that anthropological sciences would define as "acculturation" (Zincone, 2009). The main aim of this approach is to achieve "political and legal equality of subjects" based on a public culture that recognizes the neutrality and secularism of the State.

In fact, the assimilationist model assigns rights to the individual, accepting him as the only interlocutor, but not to social or ethnic groups; moreover, the State maintains a strong secular role, that of the guarantor of cultural and religious freedom, as long as it is the State. Cultural and religious freedom, as long as it does not invade the public sphere and remains a private matter.

However, the emergence of ethnic conflicts, racist and xenophobic attitudes, and political proposals in countries such as France, for example, has put this strategy of achieving cultural integration through the granting of citizenship into crisis.

In particular, the second and third generations of immigrants have experienced a reality of inequality in every context, from school to the world of work: the psychological, cultural and socio-economic discomfort has given rise to cases of revolt in the Parisian banlieues and has given rise to new forms of ideological, political-religious extremism, typical products of modernity, as in the case of Islamic radicalism.

This type of assimilationism, defined as "statist" (Zanfrini, 2011), is very different from the "societal" assimilationism typical of the United States, where the role of the guarantor is entrusted not to the State but to civil society and the market. Here, assimilation is seen as a gradual process in which the migrant, thanks to interaction, gets to know the host culture and the socio-economic dynamics that govern the country, and the result is a mixture of different cultures in a social context that is often not in dialogue and only apparently homogeneous.

In American culture, the migratory process is considered a "normal" way of increasing the population, a direct cause of market growth; the guest is recognized as having a certain positive function in the labor market, developed through interaction in civil society, but excluding the issue of citizenship and political equality (Zanfrini, 2011).

This first model therefore appears rather fragmented and incomplete and is considered an outdated strategy compared to that of multiculturalism, which instead seems to be the right response of Western societies to cultural diversity.

In fact, this second integration strategy is based on the idea that a real acceptance of diversity would lead to the creation of a system of parallel rights (the specific rights of the ethnic group

within the regulatory system of the host society, with the State as an impartial guarantor) and is configured as a model with predominantly public intervention, based on the recognition of the rights of groups and communities and on the acceptance of diversity.

The State guarantees legal treatment and differentiated services in favor of minorities, the bearer of a different culture is recognized through the legitimation of his specific tradition and ethnicity, and as long as no subversive forces, uncontrollable aporias, or risky elements are introduced into the social system: critics, customs, beliefs, alternative lifestyles, everything is allowed and even encouraged; in this case, the migrant is configured as a citizen recognized with rights, but limited by belonging to a specific ethnic group (Zincone, 2009).

The result is the loss of importance of the individual subject in relation to his or her linguistic community and a "trivialization (or Disneyfication) of cultural differences, as we witness not only the formation of hermetically sealed ethnic groups but also forms of intercultural dialogue that remain folkloric and superficial, with a high risk of reinforcing prejudices and stereotypes, capable of further polarizing ethnic relations.

For the Canadian political scientist Kymlicka (1995), the multicultural model, which has changed consistently over time, has recovered mechanisms of an assimilationist type (also defined as "civic integration"), which the scholar sees as "correctives" rather than an attempt to abandon the multicultural model, which contributes to adapting the theoretical part of the strategy to different cultural-political and socio-economic realities.

The most relevant interventions in this respect concern training and language issues and the establishment of learning pathways that allow the migrant to become familiar with the language, interact with civil society, and thus acquire the basic knowledge that facilitates the experience of citizenship. In this respect, however, recent data and based on field observations show a clear incompatibility between multiculturalism and civic integration. These forms of integration would be idiosyncratic in every respect because they are based on an explicit rejection of the multicultural model.

More precisely, it is possible to identify two main sources of friction between the policies of the two models (Kymlicka, 2012):

- the shift from a culture of rights to a culture of duties. There are liberal forms of integration (e.g., the Netherlands and Denmark) that offer migrants compulsory support and training programs because cultural integration is conceived as a duty rather than a right: failure to comply with the rules means direct exclusion from renewal of residence permits and social rights.
- changing the definition of national identity from "open" to "closed". A closed and all-encompassing concept of national identity implies a complete restructuring of the migrant's personality in order to adopt a new identity devoid of all previous identity components. (Kymlicka, 2012)

However, such frictions can be overcome by a "hybrid model" based largely on multiculturalism corrected by assimilationist policies of civic integration, which envisage policies based on tolerance and an open conception of national identity, within a cultural framework of shared ideals, defense of human rights and the search for new citizenship relations.

The hybridization of models can operate according to some very specific conditions that have much to do with the representations of the collective imagination and the attitudes of social subjects (Tarozzi & Torres, 2016):

- the migrant must not be perceived as a threat: relations between the State and minorities must be framed in the context of an effective social policy.
- strong interaction, free of prejudice, between the host society and other cultures, respecting individual rights.
- the perception by citizens that national borders are secure.
- avoidance of polarization towards a single foreign culture, fostering a culture of coexistence.
- the perception of the migrant as an added value, a resource capable of making the market more dynamic and thus contributing to the economic growth of society. (Tarozzi & Torres, 2016)

The fierce debate that is still going on in politics, which opposes the multicultural model and assimilationism, is beginning to prefigure the construction of new "mixed" integration systems, with the aim of exclusively activating the positive potential of both.

Over time, socio-economic changes have favored the emergence of new sectors of production, new markets, new technologies, and new forms of organization, which in turn have generated new social relations of production. This has also led to greater flexibility of capital and of the concept of citizenship itself, which, obedient to the logic of global capitalism, sees the migrant as more of a "transmigrant" (Ong, 1999), dependent on the

constant redefinition of borders, international interconnections and the birth of new cultural and virtual identities.

The phenomena associated with transnationalization (or globalization) have produced unexpected results, especially at the symbolic level, such as the transformation of the meanings of 'otherness' and 'identity', of 'difference', and a high degree of distortion in communication.

An interesting element highlighted by Ulf Hannerz (1996) is that of the "de-territorialization of diversities", which today are not abolished but radically transformed, in the sense that we can find new ones with original characteristics compared to the old cultural diversities, and the same goes for identities. Today, we speak of "multiple" identities, "migrant" identities, and "community-virtual" identities as local effects of globalization (Musarò & Parmiggiani, 2014).

Different concepts, but now united by the idea of networks and connections, are typical elements of information technology, now articulated in a civil society characterized by mobility, migrations, and hybridizations of all kinds. Faced with this scenario, the right question to ask is no longer how a migrant culture is structured and how it can relate to the host culture but what processes are activated between one and the other; the migrant himself experiences the geographical and cultural passage in a completely new way, assuming a new mixed identity that only leaves room for new forms of interaction with the other, since it is not possible to trace common elements, either with the culture of origin or with that of the host culture. Neither with the culture of origin nor with that of arrival (Brancato, 2004; Nederveen-Pieterse, 2010).

2. Global cultural mosaics

The idea of postmodern nomadism and the idea of contamination are well expressed in neologisms such as "interculturalism" and "transculturality".

In the first case, the concept, which originated in the pedagogical field, defines a type of education, as well as the attention to schools and youth that has been cultivated in Europe since the second half of the twentieth century, but was then extended to the field of social sciences to include the world of migration, issues related to diversity and conflicts between cultures (Ducci, 2007; Tarozzi & Torres, 2016).

The term "transculture," on the other hand, in addition to being more recent, goes beyond those intercultural doctrines and practices that insist on difference, otherness, and conflicts between cultures, imagining (and finding in the globalized world) a new social subject, "a new type of migrant," unbound by original roots, open to the new and different, cosmopolitan, citizen of the world and bearer of cultural collages and patchworks, therefore far from fixed identities, structured cultural models and stereotypes (Hannerz, 1996). Within this new complex scenario, the first thing that can be noted is the existence of a plurality of cultures, which constitute the basis of identity, but which can no longer be understood solely as a "cultural mosaic," that is, as a set of fragmented spaces separated by boundaries that define the tiles of a mosaic, and this because these tiles are not homogeneous. For Hannerz (1996), cultures are plural, but this does not mean that they are neatly juxtaposed within well-defined historical and geographical boundaries, traced by religion and politics, but that the pieces of the "cultural mosaic" do not necessarily appear as closed and, above all, that they are not reproduced in separate and non-communicating spaces.

Cultures are dynamic, mobile, interconnected processes, networks that interact with each other, and it is no coincidence that the sociological effects of transculturality are contamination, mixing, and hybridism, and the experiences lived by individual subjects are nomadism and liquidity.

The world painted by Hannerz (1996) presents two dimensions: the local, where structured cultures, roots, and individual lives resist, and the global, where reticular interconnections and the perception of transience and constant change emerge.

Unlike the previous ones, this conception minimizes the importance of the social structure identified in the nation-state and focuses attention on social action, on interactions between individuals and micro-groups, introducing fragments of change in individual lives: the point of view of social actors represents an interdependent and mobile world in search of a constant balance between the local and the global.

Bauman (2006) also adopted a similar approach through the concept of "habitat," which is not a given space, defined and structured territorially, physically, but a provisional and flexible context, generated and redefined by social action and the symbolic meanings that constitute it; the habitat is a context of shared meaning that expands and overlaps, it is made

up of resources and objectives that are the components of action, the skills of the actors themselves.

It was Wolfgang Welsch (1999), a German scholar, who introduced the concepts of "transculturality and transculturalism"; the first understood as a new paradigm of cultural identity, a different representation of culture, no longer homogeneous and compact, the second as a set of new visions and policies produced by processes of intercultural hybridization and migratory phenomena; What Welsch (1999) underlines is that complex societies do not structure a single cultural form, on the contrary, the increasingly rapid transcultural thrust produces different models that diversify to the extent that they contaminate and hybridize.

While the multicultural model tends to facilitate coexistence through the instrument of mutual tolerance, the allocation of autonomous and self-managed spaces, interculturalism uses diversity for an exchange of cultures that softens resistance and encourages communication and the comparison of ideas, flows of linguistic and cultural elements (Welsch, 1999). The State of (cultural) interconnectedness is facilitated precisely by instantaneous electronic communication, and confirmation occurs "when the image of Nelson Mandela becomes more familiar than our neighbors (...) so something has changed in the nature of our daily experience" (Giddens, 2002, pp. 11-12).

Only the concept of transculturality is able at this point to represent the nature of relations between cultures; the one explored by Welsch (1999) is a two-level model: the macro-level of society, where transculturality is understood as the result of advanced processes capable of apparently connecting more diverse cultures through ever larger and more branched networks, and the micro-level of interpersonal interactions and individuals.

The concepts of network, interconnection, and crossing represent the movement and evolution of cultures on the global scene today; even Simmel's concept of the "foreigner" fades into a mixed-race configuration that defines the postmodern subject beyond its culture, belief systems, and skin color. At the micro level, identities are, in fact, "transcultural constructions" in which the individual appears as a cultural hybrid, at the center of networks, flows, multiple and diversified identities that fluidize his or her existence and the very concepts of citizenship, civic identity and national identification (Brancato, 2004).

However, globalization does not facilitate transcultural processes; it also produces critical social and cultural issues, distortions, contradictions between homogenizing forces (McDonaldisation), and new forms of tribalization and closure in the face of the threat and imposition of cultural uniformity.

The transcultural approach therefore focuses attention not on differences and polarities, but on intersections, on the junctions that guarantee online flows, thus promoting exchange and negotiation in places of cross-fertilization and hybridization.

Theories and analyses of the phenomenon of hybridization and the symbolic component of global events, with particular reference to the impact on collective imaginations and representations, have been developed by many scholars of globalization, but particularly interesting is the reflection proposed by Nederveen-Pieterse (2010), who emphasizes the need to link structural and superstructural phenomena, focusing research on the transformations of the global economy and the epochal impact they have had on cultural processes.

The theory he develops traces the processes of internationalization from afar, recovering concepts such as 'hegemony' and 'empire', with a particular focus on social inequality and the recent movements that oppose the discriminatory and anti-democratic consequences of globalization (Nederveen-Pieterse, 2003).

He is particularly interested in the cultural repercussions of globalizing processes and the concept of "hybridism," which is at the core of his socio-anthropological studies, a concept that is used as a "hermeneutic tool" to interpret the cultural dimensions of globalization in a broader anthropological context, showing how intercultural flows constitute the dynamic background of development in all historical phases.

Starting from our common African origins, humanity has developed according to a pattern dominated by cultural hybridism, and in this sense, Westernisation should not be confused with globalization; while contemporary globalization has produced new border dialectics, the rise of nationalism in communication, production and consumption processes, at the same time we have witnessed the emergence of new borders, which in turn produce restrictions in terms of risk containment policies and migration.

For Nederveen-Pieterse (2007), the process of integration is the very representation of globalization, in which the spread of global capitalism favors both forms of human mobility and at the same time produces new stratifications and new hierarchies.

At the basis of his thinking is another interesting concept, apparently an oxymoron, that of "global multiculturalism," with which the scholar tries to explain the peculiarities of local cultures and the flattening and homogenizing reality of globalization, a concept that encompasses both the network processes visible in transnational phenomena and the accentuation of the multicultural (global) dimension, understood as the fragmentation of new forms of "loyalty - fidelity," with which an attempt is made to explain the balance between cultures and the transformations that activate human mobility globally. It is no coincidence that Nederveen-Pieterse (2003, p.20) speaks of cultures in the plural, defining them as "software in use in specific devices," forms of emotional and cognitive learning linked to circumscribed contexts such as nations, cities, ethnic groups (involuntarily) always linked.

Through the processes described, a plural ego is thus constituted that reflects on the public dimension, (re)defining the concepts of "citizen" and "citizenship," which, as we shall see, has repercussions on the methods of participation in public life and on the ways in which forms of representation are redefined.

Citizenship so much talked about in politics and the media, is expressed in plural terms and, above all, takes on value connotations. Think of the long and still ongoing debate on the ius soli, ius culturae, ius sanguinis, which concerns second and third-generation migrants and which is being fought over precisely the sense of belonging of those who are not coincidentally called new citizens, increasingly in tune with the contexts of life and in solidarity with the social groups they frequent.

In this respect, Marshall (1950) distinguishes three different elements that characterize citizenship in democratic societies:

- civil rights: described as those necessary for individual freedom (freedom of speech, belief, thought).
- political rights, which consist of the possibility of having active or passive access to the exercise of political power.

- social rights are understood as those capable of ensuring economic security and well-being. (Marshall, 1950)

These rights are not obvious or immediate; they are acquired slowly over time in different forms depending on the socio-political context, or they can even be denied.

Dahlgren speaks of civic agency as a particular way of building citizenship that takes place within a civil society, which is understood as a space distinct from the private sphere but also from political and economic institutions. A new relational context that adapts the Habermasian concept of the public sphere to the transformations brought about by the concentration of numerous subjects and social phenomena (Solito *et al.,*2020).

At the local, national, and European levels, another challenge can be identified: the construction of institutional communication capable of guaranteeing ways and spaces of relating to increasingly mobile citizens through new digital technologies.

Communicating immigration, diversity, or rather the plurality of a community is a specific skill that public institutions should acquire to rebalance certain somewhat distorted media narratives. In fact, public communication can be a strategic channel for managing migratory flows and the inclusion of foreign subjects, promoting effective cohesion as much as possible.

This starts with municipalities and regions, which are fundamental elements in this process of creating and strengthening community, as they are closer to citizens and more aware of individual realities.

3. Interculture (as) sensibility
The socio-political response that seems to prevail today in the face of multicultural diversity and insecurity is the implementation of security measures restricting migratory flows within one's own borders, with the sole aim of discouraging the entry of others and making it more uncertain and less comfortable (Binotto *et al.*, 2016).

In this way, the identity of the migrant, mobile, on the move, is configured only and exclusively through the eyes of the country of immigration: an identity that would perhaps be more accurately defined as 'non-identity.'

It is constituted as an eternal deprivation: the migrant is a "non-national," he is other than the whole, he is a non-social subject. It is as if the subject has undergone a kind of "personalization" and has been configured as a "non-person."

Undoubtedly, the mass media, and especially the new media, play an important role in the perception and representation of migratory processes, even before politics.

A strong sense of irresponsibility on the part of the media emerges clearly following the adoption of faulty communication and a never-neutral language aimed at the emotionality ("gut") of the spectator-citizen; a "schematic labeling" of the phenomenon, passing through the lexical choices often made in the media (the expression "barbaric invasion" is a clear example).

One tool that could be useful in preventing the meeting from taking on a clash and conflict dynamic is intercultural competence. Cultural literacy is the lifeline of today's world, a fundamental resource for adequately managing the many places through which education is transmitted (from the family and tradition to the media, both old and new, and from activities to informal groups) and an indispensable tool for overcoming the clash of ignorance.

It is, therefore, necessary to consider diversity as a question of relationship and interaction between subjects with different cultures; the different socio-cultural characteristics should not be neutralized or assimilated but understood as a resource and not as a social danger.

From this perspective, in order to develop our model of intercultural communication specific to institutions, it could be useful to first refer to the Dynamic Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (MDSI) of the sociologist M. J. Bennett (2013), which can be considered as a conceptual reference framework, a clear starting point applicable to the complex Italian social scenario, with the overcoming of the "Golden Rule" and the underlying assumption of the acceptance of diversity and the recognition of differences.

Intercultural communication is synonymous with competence, (active) listening and sharing, and effective interaction with others in the same space.

More precisely, according to the sociologist Bennett (2013), it is a "process of negotiation of meanings between two or more subjects with different cultures and who have a single objective: to build and share individual and social realities."

The consideration of the model of intercultural sensitivity is particularly interesting because it not only aims at learning to recognize and deal with the differences between cultures in the perception of the world, but it is also based on a concept that is today the main problem of the Italian socio-political situation in relation to the migratory phenomenon, namely that of "differentiation."

For Bennett, cultures offer different interpretations and help us to better perceive the world around us, so that difference is no longer synonymous with insecurity or deviance, but becomes a resource, that is, a tool that favors the development of the ability to recognize and live with differences.

The aim is to move from "denial-defense" to "acceptance-adaptation-integration," from "ethnocentrism," which recognizes culture as a closed and stable process, to "ethnorelativism," where difference is not a threat but a "challenge."

The last stage of this intercultural journey, integration, is particularly interesting.

While in the adaptation phase, there are different reference systems for everyone, in the integration phase, we try to reduce the different systems to one, which is neither the affirmation of culture nor a simple convenience for the peaceful coexistence of different visions of the world. Integration requires a continuous definition of the identity of the individual in terms of lived experience. This could lead to no longer belonging to any culture but forever being an 'integrated outsider.'

Furthermore, Bennett believes that intercultural learning is a challenge to one's identity but can become a way of life and a way of enriching one's identity.

The driving force behind this whole process of integration is empathic communication, i.e. a new way of relating to and getting to know the other, not only by accepting and recognizing difference, but also by adopting a new style of communication, a new vision of the world, by expanding one's behavioral repertoire.

Knowledge, communication, and training on these issues are currently at the root of an intercultural process that is still very weak, which is why the socio-economic policies implemented to date have proved ineffective.

This model also offers a more political vision of the phenomenon: considering that intercultural learning is an individual process, it is essential to learn how to live together in a diverse world.

From this perspective, intercultural learning is the starting point for peaceful coexistence.

4. What is the role of institutions and intercultural public communication?

In addition to the questions raised about media representation and global, cultural, and digital changes, the analysis of the relationship between communication and the phenomenon of migration and the more general challenges of interculturality lead us to reflect on another aspect that is often underestimated (or even overlooked).), and that is how public administrations can best implement social inclusion initiatives and promote the aspects of sharing that result from the meeting of different cultures, rethinking integration as a condition that can be achieved both by living (in) difference and by improving communication at an interpersonal level in order to build that bond of trust with the foreign citizen.

The communicative dimension, as well as the relational one, constitutes the essence of the relationship between migrant communities and institutions and undoubtedly supports policies and processes of cultural integration. The way in which the process of integrating migrants into a social context takes place (from housing to access to services, avoiding any form of discrimination) is closely linked to the structure of the host society and the functioning of the relevant institutions (Zanfrini, 2011).

A complex challenge is that of the migratory crisis, which requires us to rethink institutional communication, especially at the local level, to guarantee new strategies of inclusion and social participation that respond to the diversified information needs that constitute the territory (Kymlicka, 2012).

The scenarios that characterize today's public space, which is increasingly shared by discursive practices and multi-ethnic social relations, require European and national

institutions to play a more active role in communication strategies for the inclusion of immigrant citizens.

It is not only about creating links and common ground between different cultures, communities, and populations, involving and empowering local communities (Musarò & Parmiggiani, 2014; Ducci, 2012) but also about activating public communication processes and actions that make citizens more aware, informed and plural.

The scenarios that characterize today's public space, increasingly co-inhabited by discursive practices and multi-ethnic social relations, require European and national institutions to play a more active role in communication strategies for the inclusion of immigrant citizens.

Added to this is the crucial and strategic role of the media in the production of publicly relevant discourses that effectively aim to support and develop cultural integration and citizenship policies (Wessendorf, 2010).

Address and analyze the issue of public communication in relation to the complex phenomenon of migration and, more generally, to that of civic coexistence and cultural diversity to reflect on how institutions can best implement integration initiatives through a more effective comparison with local media.

Integration, especially in the territorial context, must be adequately promoted by pursuing new communication strategies that respond to the diverse information needs that make up the community (Zanfrini, 2011; Kymlicka, 2012).

More generally, it is a question of promoting appropriate governance strategies aimed at defining greater cooperation with communication operators in order to overcome dichotomous and stereotyped narratives on the subject of migratory flows and to guarantee socially useful information.

The aim is twofold: on the one hand, to facilitate the integration processes of foreign citizens through more effective communication of services, from counter and reception activities to methods of access to services, to the implementation of communication campaigns to counteract phenomena of xenophobia.

Communication campaigns to counter the phenomena of xenophobia or, more generally, to promote respect and recognition of diversity (Ducci, 2012).

On the other hand, it is necessary to work towards a greater synergy between self-produced and externally produced communication so that local policies can shape media narratives by offering journalists a framework in which to present events related to the migration phenomenon.

At present, immigration is presented as an emergency and a problem to be solved, whose protagonists are exclusively either victims or criminals, a cause of public order, insecurity, or an obstacle to the civil coexistence of local communities (Baraldi, 2003).

Numerous studies on the subject (Binotto *et al.*, 2016) have shown how all this is done mainly through storytelling techniques and tools, in which the central event is presented and commented on, often in the news, but without abandoning an accurate description of the facts, and the existential fear of the unknown is fuelled by the media, creating alarmism and anxiety.

However, there is a difference in the way the migration phenomenon is covered by the national and local media.

The latter is an indispensable resource of the information system and tends to offer a more positive portrayal of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Several authors (Bennet *et al.*, 2011; Kymlicka, 2012) have highlighted how local information can be more qualified and attentive to the diversity and difficulties of immigrant subjects compared to national information.

The local context represents a fundamental dimension of pluralism, especially in a globalized society where local identities, on the one hand, take on a new, fundamental role of social connectivity and, on the other, risk losing attention and depth from the ecosystem of national and international information.

Local information is characterized by its own specificity's proximity, immediacy, identity, and contextualization are essential elements of the plurality of cultures, languages, points of

view, and, more generally, of the diversity that characterizes contemporary societies and that requires inclusion, including media inclusion, and active participation.

Attention to ethnic and cultural diversity seems to be particularly linked to a more active presence of decentralized institutions and different social actors in the definition of integration and reception policies.

Grossi (1995) has drawn attention to the role of local media in regional contexts, highlighting how these channels have proved to be more 'sensitive' to the narration of the migratory phenomenon and the expression of moral judgments on issues of public relevance.

Constant contact with the territory, citizens, and institutions makes mediation and mediatization less rigid and fragmented when the migrant and his story are represented in the media.

From this point of view, greater attention to intercultural integration on the part of territorial authorities can be a fundamental opportunity to adopt targeted communication strategies aimed at informing citizens and meeting their needs through communication channels that are accessible to all. At the same time, these actions can encourage local media to provide balanced information, to avoid the spread of prejudices, stereotypes and misrepresentations, and to promote mutual dialogue between different cultures (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. IPC - Model Scheme.
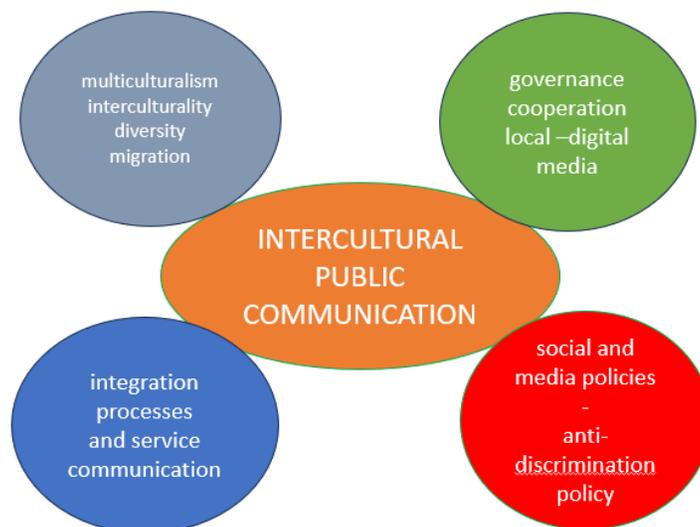
Source: own design

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is fair to ask again: What is intercultural public communication (IPC)?

Using the language of the sociologist Sorokin, what has been described and analyzed is an example of "altruistic creative love" applied to the institutional world, which, as they are still described and perceived today, seem to present themselves as an extension of that sensist culture responsible for the prevalence of selfishness and social injustice.

In media and political environments, the logic of sharing and window-dressing can not only highlight the existence of altruistic personalities within institutions, but the digital space itself seems to be open to altruistic values and creative media practices, capable of "infecting" technically and culturally ordinary forms of solidarity, the greater the possibility that each connected institutional subject knows and applies altruistic love, also digitally, against any form of social injustice and discrimination.

Institutions, traditional means of information, and the main socialization agencies should invest in altruistic education, Sorokin himself suggests, but above all, in research into

educational and training techniques that appeal not only to reason but also to the affectivity and emotionality of the individual.

People are capable of feeling sympathy and human understanding, argues Edgar Morin (2015) especially when suffering and injustice suddenly appear to us through an image or other media support. Even through social representation and media tools, understanding of the other and altruism can be generated. This happens because a process of identification and empathy takes place that "allows us to see the complexity of the aspects of a person."

Theatre, cinema, blogs, and applications, if used in an altruistic and empathetic way, can make human understanding possible. When these means are used to seek power and personal success, violence and domination over the other prevail.

For this reason, in the process of teaching human identity, it is necessary to teach, also through new media, a still missing but fundamental element: human understanding and its transmission. This is possible by creating "hotbeds of resistance" in online and offline spaces against all forms of barbarism, cruelty, and communicationism.

This does not just mean not accepting any form of oppression, aggression, or violence. Rather, it means saying yes to freedom, humanity, rights, and the improvement of human relations to keep the debate on current political, social, and cultural issues related to migrants critical and rational in an increasingly polarized public sphere. These are issues that cannot be addressed by absolutizing the relevance of communication processes in an uncritical way, thus adhering to a "mythologized vision of communication" (Sorrentino, 2021), but by knowing the contexts and contributing to the construction and defense of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a vision of promoting and protecting fundamental freedoms by all public and private institutions.

The quest for integration and citizenship cannot be separated from the responsibilities of individuals and institutions.

All of this requires giving greater centrality to what Maddalena and Gili (2017) define as a "rich realism," based on a conception of communication "as a "total" social phenomenon that requires the integration of different points of view" that is, the contextualization necessary for a type of habit of action that is difficult for the human being to acquire and

maintain if it is not constantly reminded and supported by vital community relationships that stimulate openness to the world and a non-skeptical education in thought criticism.

It is therefore necessary to look beyond the representation of the world, to go beyond the story, to know the other, to explore and respect his space.

The dignity of the human person should and must always be at the heart of social and institutional problems.

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