The Interference of the Mass media in the Intercultural Dialogue during the Emergency Landings in the Mediterranean: Between Reality and Representation

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to highlight the difficulties that characterise the intercultural dialogue in specific contexts and situations of emergency. The paper focuses on the interference of the mass media and their representations in the dynamics of intercultural dialogue among emergency operators and migrants at the borders.

These aspects will be examined by relating the results of prior researches carried out on mass media representations of the landings to those obtained by the participating observation in the island of Lampedusa during the landings and the migrants' protests.

The results show how the frames of the mass media representation in its alarmist/pietistic approach may be reiterated in models of intercultural dialogue between operators and migrants.

Keywords: Frame, Intercultural communication, Landings, Mass media, Migration.

1. Intercultural communication as a problem

In the collective imagination, the idea is shared that intercultural communication is a desirable and ideal communicative modality in contemporary complex societies (Asante & Gundykunst, 1989). It is a kind of communication that aims at openness towards others and embracing their diversities (Ganesh & Holmes, 2011).

As Bennett (1998) claims, an intercultural perspective does not aim to understand the differences between different cultures, but the way these differences intervene and affect face to face interaction among individuals of different cultures.

In consideration of this perspective, we are suggesting, according to Baraldi (2004) and Kim (2007), that intercultural communication is therefore seen as a "problem". The problem is of acceptance of those fundamen-

tal cultural forms that are not shared: "communication is intercultural when it produces the significance of a lack of shared cultural symbols on behalf of the participants" (Baraldi, 2004, p. 44).

This kind of communication is based on the idea of an effort to mediate cultural universes that recognise each other as different (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988), a sort of "conviviality between differences" (Donati, 2008, p. 55). This awareness implies, however, that individuals are able to look at their belonging culture in a reflexive way, trying to go beyond its limits (*Ibidem*).

The aim of this contribution is to clarify the difficulties that characterise the intercultural dialogue in specific contexts and situations of emergency. Particularly, the paper analyses the interference of the mass media and their representations in the intercultural dialogue to understand how they affect interactions among individuals of different cultures, specifically among a specialised audience (i.e. operators) and migrants, during emergency situations like landings. In the analysis of this specific communicative situation, attention should focus not only on the cultural dimension (Donati, 2008) and/or on the interpersonal communication dimension (Giaccardi, 2005), but it must take into account intervening variables, among these, the role of the mass media and their representations of reality, but also the specificities of the contexts in which the intercultural dialogue takes place.

These aspects will be examined connecting what emerged from the researches that analyse the arrival of the migrants at the borders with the forms of intercultural dialogue used by the "emergency operators", examining, respectively, both reality and representation. Although the compared studies are based on different methodologies and approaches, they appear to be synergetic in re-establishing the complexity of the dynamics of intercultural dialogue and investigating them from different perspectives.

2. *Multiple interferences in the dimension of "inter"-cultural communication*

Several studies recognise the responsibility of the mass media in building a discourse on alterity often focused on the stigmatisation, the stereotyping or the strengthening of in-group/out-group mechanisms

(Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Calvanese, 2011; King & Wood, 2001; Morley, 2002; Van Dijk, 1991).

The rhetoric and the languages used by the media provide public opinion with some interpretative instruments which convey stereotyped images of the "other", whose presence is felt as a social problem (Marletti, Grossi, & Roncarolo, 1991). The public discourse on terrorism, where one of the solutions proposed is patrolling borders, highlights how immigration is associated through public opinion with a terrorist threat. Another example is the case of Ventimiglia in spring 2016, where a temporary refugee camp was dismantled after migrants' protests caused by the closure of the French borders. As a consequence, they were hosted in a school sports hall, raising protests among pupils' mothers complaining that migrants were occupying spaces attended by their children (*TG1*, 11/06/2016; *repubblica.it*, 13/06/2016).

Besides the role of the media, the contexts, the situations and the conditions in which interaction takes place are of great importance in framing the intercultural dialogue.

In fact, according to Durant and Shepherd (2009), the dimension of the "inter", which is characteristic of intercultural communication, is one in which "the behaviour that speakers exhibit in such circumstances provides evidence less of styles associated with their cultural origins than of their 'inter' activity and improvisation, which may start, stop and modulate from moment to moment". In some contexts and situations the "speakers suspend 'their own' cultural styles and mobilize meta-pragmatic strategies as a kind of accommodation to what they see and hear around them" (2009, p. 160).

Therefore highlighting the dimension of the "inter" means considering the multiple interferences that appear in intercultural communication, like that "between culture and location, between location and communication, between culture and communication, and among all three" (*Ibidem*).

The contribution of the two authors helps us understand how the interrelationships among location, communication and cultural dimension intervene in the construction of the "inter" dimension. This is particularly important in our study, which focuses on border areas which are exposed to migration flows, where people of different cultures modulate their communicative patterns on the basis of the three elements mentioned above. In these contexts, the factors intervening in the intercultural dialogue are: the critical situation of the emergency and the security policies

related to it (location); the interference of the media in the interpersonal dialogue and in its representation to public opinion (communication); and the encounter between people of different cultures who play different roles (culture).

Starting from these premises, our analysis aims at examining the relationship between two fundamental aspects. The first refers to the specificity of the context of the border zones in which intercultural communication takes place for the first time, like the island of Lampedusa. Here, the communicative modality is put into effect in emergencies and the communicative pattern used by staff during the intercultural dialogue tends to strengthen a securitarian policy. As a result, the "inter" dimension is muffled by this communicative modality and by the asymmetric roles among emergency operators and migrants.

The second aspect is based on the role played by the mass media on a dual level within intercultural communication among these subjects. The first level involves the impact of newspapers' representations of the arrival and management of the migrants on a specific part of public opinion—the volunteers and the operators at the borders. The second level involves the presence of the media and the information operators in these border regions in situations of emergency, such as landings or migrants' protests. The purpose is to understand if and how their presence in these contexts interferes with the interaction between operators and migrants, influencing the terms within which it takes place.

To carry out this analysis, a theoretical framework will be recreated with relation to the main and more recent studies in communication research. These have outlined models, narrative styles and the most recurrent rhetoric in the media representation of the phenomenon of the landings in Lampedusa on behalf of the Italian press (Associazione Carta di Roma, 2013; Belluati, 2014; Binotto & Martino, 2004; Binotto, Bruno, & Lai, 2016; Bruno, 2014, 2015; Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014; Sciortino & Colombo, 2004).

These researches were carried out by the network of partner Universities of the Associazione Carta di Roma[1] in collaboration with UNHCR, and through a frame and content analysis applied to the front pages of national

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[1] http://www.cartadiroma.org

daily newspapers[2] (Associazione Carta di Roma, 2013; Belluati, 2014; Binotto et al., 2016; Bruno, 2014; Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014).

In the second part of the article, the emergent study results will be compared, where possible, with the results of the participating observation realised during the same period of time chosen by the studies on the media representation of the landings in Lampedusa.

The participating observation allowed an analysis of operators' modus operandi to identify models of dialogue and the potential interference that derives from the presence of the media on the ground.

From a methodological point of view, research on the media representation of the landings in Lampedusa considers the years of 2011 and 2013. This is a significant period in the history of migration in Italy as a consequence of the Arabic revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and mostly in Libya in 2011 and, in 2013, of the worsening civil war in Syria and the military dictatorship in Eritrea.

Observation of the relational attitudes between migrants and operators was carried out on the ground using the technique of participating observation by a researcher who took part directly in the dynamics of the management of the migratory fluxes on the island. More specifically, the researcher worked in Lampedusa in 2011 and 2013 on behalf of three different organisations: the INMP (National institute for the promotion of the health of migrants and the control of poverty-related diseases) and the ASP 06 (Provincial Sanitary Agency of Palermo) as a linguistic and cultural mediator. This meant being an intermediary on the expressional and cultural level between migrants and staff in charge of the first assistance: the researcher interacted with both of them. He was also in charge of the monitoring of the migratory movement to the island on behalf of the Onlus Borderline-Sicilia association.

The ethnographic method allowed him to understand the difficulties related to intercultural communication in emergency situations; the distance between the media representation of the emergency and the actual facts;

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[2]2011 analysis: *Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica, La Stampa, Il Giornale, L'Unità* and *Libero*; 2013 analysis: *Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica, La Stampa, L'Unità, L'Avvenire, Il Giornale* and *Libero*; local view: *La Padania* and *Il Corriere di Sicilia*.

and if and how the media in Lampedusa affected communication patterns between migrants and operators.

The observations were anonymous, with dissimulation of the researcher's role; therefore the dialogues with migrants and operators were not structured through interviews but through informal dialogues. On the one hand, the dissimulation of his research purposes allowed the operators to trust the researcher and share their impressions with him spontaneously; on the other hand, his role as a linguistic and cultural mediator exposed him more directly to the intercultural dynamics than any other operator, enabling him to be in a privileged dialogue with migrants.

The observations were later registered through brief notes with references to the causes of the observed interaction, the number and the typology of the interlocutors, the space and time context, and the role played in this interaction by the mass media and their operators.

Choosing to focus the analysis on the events occurring in Lampedusa in that specific period is due to the fact that the island is a privileged observatory for studies on interculturality. In fact, the management of migrant arrivals (based on emergency and security policies, disembarkation, identification and hosting in temporary facilities that are often crowded) and the applied media representations are nowadays repeated and proposed with reference to the recent migratory fluxes in many European areas. The island still represents an emblematic location on which the media have built their narratives and rhetoric about the problems and the emergencies linked to immigration and interculturality, as shown by some headlines pertaining to the most recent news about migration in other European countries—e.g. "Lesbos is the new Lampedusa"(*euronews.com*,19/06/2015).

3. The media representation of the landings at Lampedusa in Italian research

Within communication research, the number of national and international studies and researches analysing the media representation of migrants and their arrival, on behalf of the news, is considerable (Binotto & Martino, 2004; Binotto et al., 2016; Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Bruno, 2014; Kaye, 2001; King & Wood, 2001; Terwal, 1996; Van Dijk, 1991).

Studies carried out in Italy by the Associazione Carta di Roma and the Osservatorio di Pavia agree in their belief that the tendency towards stereotyping is still strong in the Italian press (Associazione Carta di Roma, 2013; OPV-MSF, 2012).

The tendency of the Italian press towards stereotyping follows two main directions: the first consists of frequent use of the news section (Binotto et al., 2016; Martino, 2014), while the second involves framing the events in an alarmist interpretative frame. This was the prevalent frame in all the newspapers analysed during the landing in Lampedusa in 2011, except that in the newspaper *L'Unità*, left-leaning, where the prevalent frame was based on solidarity (Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014). These two kinds of media representation are affected by the oversimplification with which the news on the front pages of all the analysed newspapers deals with events that include foreigners and/or the migration issue as protagonists *(Ibidem)*.

Furthermore, the mechanisms of involuntary distortion that occurs in the newsmaking process must be considered. The routine of news production often sacrifices a more detailed analysis of causes or an in-depth analysis of events due to a lack of time or space limitations. Consequently, a narrative style closer to spectacularisation and dramatisation tends to prevail (Golding & Elliott, 1979). These narrative models contribute to labelling the migrant as an uncomfortable and/or dangerous person (Van Dijk, 1991).

Among these studies, special attention was paid to landing issues in Italy (Belluati, 2014; Binotto & Martino, 2004; Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014; Sciortino & Colombo 2004) which, as Bruno and Lai (2016, p. 56) claims, represent a "media icon" of the whole migration issue.

More specifically, the moment of arrival has become a proper literary "topos" in the medial narrative of the phenomenon, supported by a rhetoric related to the representation of the migrants helped by operators, volunteers and law enforcements (Binotto & Martino, 2004; Bruno, 2014).

As Bruno (2014) and Ieracitano and Rumi (2014) outline, in the media narratives of the migrants' arrivals between 2011 and 2013, the Italian press uses interpretative frames often based on the "alarm/undesirability" and "welcome/pietism" dichotomy.

The semantic domain of "alarm/undesirability", widespread between newspapers with different political leanings, is clear in the frequent recourse to the number of landings together with headlining choices that evoke the image of invasion, like "human tsunami" (*La Stampa*, 02/04/2011), "record-breaking landings" (*La Stampa*, 09/04/2011) or "Lampedusa emergency: more migrants than inhabitants" (*La Repubblica*, 23/03/2011).

This goes hand in hand with a still inappropriate terminology that labels migrants, with particular reference to the landings in 2011, as illegal first and as immigrants afterwards, instead of migrants (Bruno, 2014; Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014). The most frequent use of those terms and the representation of landings as a social problem emerged in the right-leaning newspapers *Il Giornale* and *Libero* (Belluati, 2014; Bruno & Lai, 2016).

The wrong terminological choices do not help public opinion to perceive the differences between the juridical statuses of the subjects of the events. This element has a fundamental influence in defining the environment in which a potential intercultural dialogue takes place, as long as the other is perceived as illegal. Therefore, even before accessing dialogue, he/she is stigmatised as illegal/criminal.

The frame of emergency is strengthened by the representation the hosting contexts offer. In this case, the word "Lampedusa" is associated with "emergency" in Italian daily newspapers of different political leanings. The island is addressed in terms of a "military district" or a "besieged border" (Bruno & Lai, 2016, p. 173,) suffering an enemy invasion, as some headlines show: "The island awaits the invasion, incessant landings" (*La Stampa*, 03/03/2011), "besieged Lampedusa" (*Libero*, 01/04/2011), "collapsing Lampedusa" (*La Repubblica*, 22/03/2011).

Although the frames of alarm, threat and undesirability appear to be dominant, representations that are more oriented towards the frame of pietism are also present. These are undoubtedly scarce compared to the dominant ones and more used by progressive newspapers like *L'Unità*, *Avvenire* and *La Stampa* (Belluati, 2014). These representations are usually used when dealing with shipwrecks, like the ones occurred between March and April 2011 or the one on 3 October 2013, when more than 300 migrants died.

In this case, the image of the "human tsunami" is replaced by "the Mediterranean cemetery" (*L'Unità*) and the "illegal immigrant" becomes the "desperate" (Belluati, 2014). The migrants that were previously addressed as a threat are now defined as "shipwrecked" (*Corriere della Sera*), "poor" (*L'Unità*) and "desperate" (*La Stampa* and all the newspapers analysed) (Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014). These lexical choices contribute to a very clear definition of the interpretation of events offered by the Italian press, often going from ethic-humanitarian to pietistic (*Ibidem*).

The tone of the media narratives changes once again when the migrants become the protagonists of protests or insurrection inside the hosting centres for migrants. In this case, the terminology used contributes to the symbolic creation of an enemy addressed as "undesired" (*Il Giornale*), "riotous" (*La Repubblica*) or even "terrorist" (*Libero*) (Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014)—in other words, the one who, being in need, has no right to rise up (Gatta, 2011).

These representations, especially when making the front pages of daily newspapers, produce an agenda effect that makes the media representation of the migrant shift towards a safety discourse, strengthening the association between immigration and deviance or immigration and risk. On the one hand, it catalyses public opinion's fears; on the other, it legitimates stricter policies in the management and access of migrants (Cerase & Lai, 2016).

3. The burden of the agenda effect on a specialised audience

The literature analysed above is an important starting point for highlighting the narrative models and stereotypes that affect the representation of landings by the Italian newspapers with different political stances.

As Atheide's studies (1997, 2002) state, the representation of reality by newspapers can affect the public's perception of phenomena and promotes the security policies related to them as a consequence of the agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The agenda effect produced by newspapers is a fundamental element of the framing process in which the migration and landings issue is contextualised.

Concerning this point of view, an interesting reference is Cook et al.'s (1983) research on the different degrees of impact the media agenda has on generic public opinion, on stakeholders and on policy makers. The research highlights how an audience made up of policy makers appears to be more sensitive towards catching the salience the media create surrounding some issues, modifying perception of their relevance. This research is an important basis for our analysis, because there is an emergent lack in the literature related to the media representation of landings and migrants focusing

on the consequences of the narrative models and frames used by the press for a specific audience, like the emergency operators. In particular, the innovative element this analysis wants to add to intercultural communication studies consists of examining whether a specialised audience adopts the frame used by newspapers, illustrated above, through their communicative patterns. It also consists of examining if and how the presence of information operators in border areas promotes some of these communicative patterns, affecting the intercultural dialogue among staff and migrants on landings.

Although in our analysis "emergency" operators do not belong to the policy maker category nor to that of stakeholders, they still undoubtedly represent a potentially sensitive segment of specialised public opinion. Being directly interested and involved in the matters the media report, the emergency operators expose themselves, in a privileged way, to how the media deal with the issue. Therefore, it could be supposed that they tend to internalise the interpretative keys the media provide and to reuse them at the moment of the encounter.

However, it is difficult to establish the direct impact of the agenda effect on this specialised audience, as long as another factor bears on the interaction with the migrant beyond the restraints that derive from the media and the belonging culture. This is the self-representation the emergency operators make of their role within these contexts and the interaction: people who take care of the one in need/the "miserable" (Gatta, 2012). Such a self-representation might interfere in the intercultural dialogue if the identification of cultural differences is affected by the self-awareness of having different roles: the migrant in need and potentially criminal on the one hand, the operator as a beneficent saviour on the other.

This impact has already been registered in Gatta (2011, 2012) and Cuttitta's (2012) analysis of the border regions. Gatta (2012) in particular remarks that the stereotype of the migrant as a "dangerous subject" influences the relational dynamics between operators and migrants. This image ends up constituting the interpretative reference through which the operators ascribe meaning to migrants' behaviour. Therefore, the first difficulty emerging from the intercultural dialogue involves those misunderstandings that derive from the widespread presumption of knowing the reasons and the intentions that lie behind their interlocutors' communicative behav-

iour. Such behaviours are considered to be deviant as long as the other is represented as an illegal subject. This determines inevitable consequences for how the emergency and the landing are handled.

The alarmist and pietistic frames the media suggest, together with the self-representation the operators make, are evident, as we will see, in the dialogue models created by the operators. They are models based on the security/humanitarian ambivalence that puts the migrant within the communicative relation as a person both to save and to control.

This needs to be taken into account in intercultural studies, given the importance of the media's role in the construction of the "inter" dimension analysed by Durant and Shepherd (2009). The Italian newspapers offer communicative patterns that can become part of the cultural background used by the emergency operators who are the privileged interlocutors of migrants on their arrival.

As a result, our contribution to intercultural communication studies is to examine not only the communication difficulties among migrants and emergency staff, but also if and how those difficulties can be related to the frames and the languages used by newspapers in their representation of landings and to the presence of journalists and cameras in border areas.

Our study thus aims, through the cases hereafter examined, to show how the emergency staff became an unwitting element of a vicious circle: they sometimes end up describing facts as newsmaking process requests and treating migrants as they are represented by media.

4. The ambivalence of intercultural dialogue and the presence of the media: observations on the ground

The participating observation carried out in Lampedusa highlighted a massive presence of the media on the island, especially in the years during which the migratory phenomenon saw its most dramatic developments (2011 and 2013) and during two fundamental moments for the local community—the landings and the protests.

In both the historical and social contexts, the observer looked at and took part in events of interaction between the newly landed migrants and the operators in charge of managing the emergency.

The principal observational context was the moment of the landing, within that specific setting represented by the arrival of hundreds of migrants, but also, and mostly, by the massive deployment of "emergency operators" (law enforcement, medical staff, humanitarian assistants and volunteers). Their interventions had great visibility on the quayside, where an area was specifically dedicated to the presence of reporters, becoming part of the setting.

At every landing, cameras represented a palpable presence that was not limited only to documentation. This was particularly evident when, in summer 2011, wooden barges full of migrants landed at the pier escorted by the patrol boats of the Coast Guard. In this situation, the presence of the media produced inevitable interference. They influenced the relational modalities between the actors involved in the problematic form of interaction—the landing. In particular, the operators, aware of the media coverage, established a consequential modus operandi and code of conduct which emphasised the migrants as subjects in need. Thus, at an early stage, intercultural communication was asymmetrical, the migrant having a subordinate role.

A first example of this was the display of an identification sticker. The purpose, especially of the humanitarian staff, was to show the logo of their belonging institution, as visibly reported on the service vest. As Figure 1 shows, more operators from the same organisation, easily recognisable, surrounded one migrant on his landing.

Fig. 1 (Source: INMP website)

The search for visibility was far from being an implicit strategy. The observer, as an operator, received an invitation from the logistic coordination to make himself as visible as possible in the landing areas, risking being reprimanded by law enforcement. This behaviour was motivated, as it emerged from informal dialogues with the team coordinators, by the need to stand out among competitor associations, to prove the team's activity to court public opinion, and to please the sponsoring bodies by showing them the importance and usefulness of their presence there. This caused a sort of competition to grab the newly landed to take care of them. The competition was deeply felt by the operators of different organisations. During the disembarkation procedures, staff from other organisations sometimes said to the observer, while he was assisting migrants: "We are already taking care of this!" as they were in possession of the migrant in need. The rush to the one in need found its highest point in the nurturing of minors, whom the operators would often hand from one person to another in front of the cameras (Fig. 2).

Fig.2 - Landing operations in Lampedusa (Source: SkyTG24 website, 08/05/2011)

During the landing, law enforcement also acted in front of the cameras. In parallel organised lines, they set up a human corridor which the newly landed went through in queues, counted one by one, before being led to rest areas for medical examination and first refreshment, before finally boarding the buses heading to the hosting centres for migrants. In this "mise-en-scène"—functional in maintaining a precise system of manage-

ment of the emergency based on a mixture of humanitarian and security purposes (Cuttitta, 2012)—migrants appeared to be unwitting actors.

A precise narrative technique was applied to them as well, which affected the intercultural dialogue between the actors concerned. As an example, the fact that migrants had smartphones with them on arrival broke the stereotypical image of the newly landed as subjects in need. Such a detail was used by enforcement staff as a cue to prove the migrants' potentially criminal nature: a subject in need cannot own a smartphone. Sentences like "Look! Their smartphones are more expensive than ours!" were frequently pronounced by the security staff in the presence of the observer during the landing operation, confirming what Gatta (2012, p. 140) defines as the effort of "finding the lie" on migrants' bodies.

However migrants behaved, the system in place on landings treated them according to this double representation which contains pietism and potential danger, confirming the image of the desperate illegal immigrant, of the "dangerous bodies in danger"(*Ibidem*, p. 135).

On the occasion of a more complex landing, cameras from the main national broadcasters—such as RAI, Mediaset and Sky—shifted, after the first phases of the landing, to the island's health centre. During dramatic events, like the landing on 3rd October 2013, the few Eritrean survivors were urgently transferred to the emergency room, where it was impossible for medical assistants to contain the pressure of the journalists, which made the whole job more difficult.

The setting, in this case, is very different from the landing; in fact, while at the pier there existed a tacit complicity between reporters and operators, inside the small health centre, instead, the presence of the media constituted a source of disturbance. In this context, the images stolen by national newspapers (*Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*) and by the cameras of newscasters TG5, TG Regione and Sky TG24 contributed to supporting a precise representation of events which was fully coherent with the "mise-en-scène" of the landing. As a confirmation, some doctors did not avoid interviews, giving details about the strong emotional impact. The manager of the island's clinic, for example, declared to journalists: "So much pain. I hardly

ever cry, but when holding the dead child in my arms I burst into tears."[3] Through informal dialogues with the manager of the clinic, it emerged how he was annoyed by the presence of cameras in the health centre. Nevertheless, when interviewed he emphasised his emotional involvement in the rescue operations, acting in line with media expectations.

No matter how genuine, such declarations contribute to that process of making a spectacle of the migration issue, as confirmed by the aforementioned studies. Such episodes outline how the emergency operators were directly involved in the process of constructing pietistic and alarmist frames. Even the observer, as an operator, was under persistent pressure from a journalist and a cameraman from France2 news to release an interview. The reporter urged him for a declaration that the migrants were everywhere and could be considered part of the island's landscape, meeting with the observer's opposition. The role of the migrants in this narrative process was mostly passive.

The same treatment pattern is reproduced within intercultural dialogue between the migrants and the operators, particularly in the way the latter approach the former, even in contexts other than that of the landing.

One of the cases observed refers to the conversations a young guest at the hosting centre on the island had with a psychologist in the summer of 2011. The migrant, who had spent a few weeks at the centre, would not eat or drink and, worse, despite great psychological and physical discomfort, he would not take the provided medications. The symptoms led to a diagnosed state of physical and psychological distress caused by the long and difficult crossing of the sea and to an antibiotic and anxiolytic treatment. To better understand the reasons for his refusal of any treatment and to evaluate the suitability of the provided treatment, the young man was offered a psychological encounter with a psychologist from the Task Force INMP and the researcher on the ground, as an intercultural mediator.

During the conversation, a reality rich in cultural and biographical elements of great interest emerged.

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[3] See Adnkronos. (06 October, 2013). Retrieved from http://www1.adnkronos.com /IGN/News/Cronaca/Lampedusa-il-medico-eroe-malato-che-ha-visto-lorrore_3269 70144.html

The young man was, in fact, the first child of his village's headman and therefore the natural heir to the throne. His father had been murdered by a rival clan and, being the direct successor, he was destined to the same fate. For this reason, he had been the victim of a ritual that only his mother could break. In his frequent nightmares, he dreamt of being chased by men threatening him with death and, fearing being poisoned, he would not eat or take medications. He would not hang around with his companions at the centre, among whom his assassins could be hiding; nor did he sleep, being afraid of being killed while asleep. Yet, after a first diagnostic evaluation, physical and psychological distress due to the crossing of the sea was the only identified cause.

The refusal of treatment by the migrant was initially considered an act of arrogance and stupidity for failing to accept a proposed suggestion for his own good. Only with deeper insight, when the migrant's personal story became clear, was that subjective dimension revealed that the management of the migratory phenomenon on the border tends to silence and flatten.

Each part involved in the situation assumed that the other could not understand. Within the dialogue with the medical staff, the migrant felt misunderstood, showing his frustration by shaking his head. Indeed, he was aware that his interlocutor had not the means to understand his personal situation, potentially being one of the co-conspirators.

On the other side, the doctor of the centre, consulted by the observer, asserted: "I know this guy very well, but if he doesn't want to take the medicines, what can I do?" His communicative pattern produced conflict in his relationship with the migrant, which was solved thanks to intercultural mediation. This case sheds light on the reproduction on a micro-level of the double representation—pietistic and alarmist—of the migrants that the media offer in their narratives and rhetoric.

The migrant, as a subject in need, has to be taken care of. In addition to the 24/7 health services within the camp, many organisations assured that further medical help was available to the newly landed, and the institution the observer was a member of was proof of this. The treatment the migrant received, however, was not adapted to his cultural background, thus proving to be ineffective. Nevertheless, his refusal often ended up being perceived as a sign of irrationality, confirming his alleged dangerousness.

Bringing to light the migrant's cultural form allowed the breaking of the pietism-alarmism dichotomy.

In the following case, the same tendency can be found with reference to the personnel in charge of managing the emergency establishing a relationship with the migrant based on a stereotyped image. From here, a model of intercultural dialogue emerged that gave little space to the migrant's subjective instances.

This case refers to a specific event of interaction between the Eritrean survivors and the authorities and law enforcement in Lampedusa. In October 2013, hundreds of caskets belonging to the victims of the shipwreck were relocated, for hygiene reasons, to Agrigento, where the funeral would also take place. This trigged strong dissent from the survivors on the island who, being relegated there for judiciary reasons, were deprived of the opportunity of grieving.

Their expressions of grief, where migrants lost consciousness, fell on the ground and cried over the caskets, were captured by cameras from the ANSA news agency and broadcaster RAI, in the presence of the observer, emphasising a pietistic representation of the facts. The observer was insistently urged by ANSA and TG2 to give an interview, in order to explain the survivors' desperate reaction. His declaration to ANSA: "they just want to close this tragic chapter and start over" (*ansa.it*, 14/10/2013) made him an unwitting part of the pietistic frame-building process.

After a few days, a committee representing the survivors—nominated by the migrants themselves to mediate between their needs and the authorities on the island—sent a formal request to the District Magistrate to participate in the funerals. The request never received an answer. As a reaction to such indifference towards their legitimate claim, a sit-in protest was organised in front of the Town Hall to negotiate the opportunity to take part in the funerals with local institutions.

Moments of tension arose when the whole group of survivors—who had already blocked every entrance to the migrants' hosting centre—joined the delegation. A march was organised with no previous notice to the institutions or any explanation as to their intentions. This alerted the law enforcement agencies, who intervened together with an ambulance and medical personnel, fearing violent or self-harm acts of the migrants.

The march turned out, on the contrary, to be a peaceful protest, a silent parade in memory of the victims. The migrants, in fact, headed to Cala Croce where, united in prayer, they could see the point in the sea where the shipwreck took place. In this case, the survivors used silence to express their dissent.

The reported episodes highlight the treatment practices and the models of communication that tended to desubjectify the image of the landed. Just as in the media representation, the migrant was not a person, but an issue. As an issue, the news framed him within oversimplified narratives. The perception that public opinion may have had of him was therefore oriented by either concern or compassion. Similarly, their requests, as in this case, met with indifference, despite surprising forms of political initiative.

In both the cases analysed, the migrant was the protagonist in various attempts at intercultural dialogue in which not only could differences find no way of being expressed, but they were even silenced, treated more as an issue than as a person with their own issues.

Furthermore, the presence of the media in these contexts influenced the interaction between the operators and the migrants, affecting the terms in which the relation developed.

The visibility the media offered may have promoted models of interaction and dialogue among the operators who ended up confirming desubjectification frames. Of course, many factors conspired to make this intercultural dialogue difficult—the emergencies, the contexts, the cultural differences and the role of the involved actors. Among these elements, though, the role of the media contributed to making the identification of differences more complex.

5. Conclusions

Compared to the aims of our analysis, the frames of the alarmist/pietistic media representation, as the observation showed, resulted in models of intercultural dialogue between the operators and the migrants. The cultural diversity that is often the basis of migrants' behaviours does not always find a way to express itself and receive full acknowledgement. On the contrary, it ends up being interpreted according to those interpretative frames

that appear to belong to specialised public opinion, like the emergency operators.

Therefore the migrant, in the communicative setting of the landing, is often given the role of the person in need who passively receives assistance. More specifically in the setting of the protest, the models of intercultural dialogue are built on an imminent and constant threat of alarm and danger. This highlights how one of the main principles of communicative action (Habermas, 1984), according to which the intention of the speaker needs to be understood in the way it is expressed, is totally undermined.

In fact, when the migrant's initiative manages to give life to some requests, these are usually met with silence, no correspondence being entered into. This enhances the migrant's frustration and increases the risk of protest, thus endorsing speculation on a possible irrational nature. This all contributes to those media narratives that light a fire—especially at the most dramatic moments (landings, protests)—overshadowing any communicative action that might qualify the migrants as people with legitimate claims rather than threats to security.

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