



Erasmus+

Project CODES
Communication, Cultural Diversity and Solidarity

Report of the meeting
**Media, organizzazioni e università
di fronte al problema della diversità**

[Media, organizations and university
facing the problem of diversity]

Edited by Gaia Peruzzi

Rome, 28/02/2018

Department of Communication and Social Research – Sapienza University of Rome
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**Media, organizations and university
facing the problem of diversity**

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The event

Schedule of the day

First part - Seminary

9:00 - Seminary **Media e Diversità: Questioni aperte** [Media and diversity: open issues]

Speakers: Fabien Wille, University of Lille

Open to PhD students in Communication, Social Research and Marketing and to Master's degree students in Media, Digital Communication and Journalism.

Second part – Meeting with the stakeholders

12:00 – **Presentation of the Project Codes**

Speakers: Bruno Mazzara, Director of the Department of Communication and Social Research; Gaia Peruzzi, Referent for the Project Codes at Sapienza

With the participation of a selected number of stakeholders of the Department

13:00 – Lunch

13:30 – **Media, organizzazioni, università di fronte al problema della diversità.**

Focus sulle competenze comunicative [Media, organizations, universities facing the problem of diversity. Focus on communication skills]

Brainstorming between stakeholders on diversity and communication skills

15:30 – Debriefing

16:00 – End of the meeting

NB. As our day schedule was made of two events (a *Seminary* and a *Brainstorming with the stakeholders*), our Report presents the participants and the themes of both the events, and the list of competences emerged during the Brainstorming.

The Seminary *Media e Diversità. Questioni aperte [Media and diversity. Open issues]*

Time and place: 9.00 am - 12.00 am Room B9, CoRiS, Via Salaria 113 Rome

Participants

PhD students in Communication, Social Research and Marketing and Master's degree students in Media, Digital Communication and Journalism.

Themes

The central role of the social responsibility of communicators and journalists in narrating the diversity, which consists in pointing a light on under-represented or neglected areas of society.

The very nature of the epistemological concept of diversity: what defines the Other, who agrees on what it is, if it derives from some form of common consensus or if it is produced by some elitist power.

Particular attention was given to *the world of sport and the media representation* of athletes, where it is believed that while the prejudice against diversity is minor, at the same time this minor prejudice doesn't lead to organic growth for the whole media sector.

The summary of the intervention is that *at the moment there are no common guidelines or policies in France on how journalists should manage the narration of diversity*. The initiative is left free and mainly in the hands of editors of newspapers that set the communication line to follow.

The absence of a common and widely shared vision on the subject represents itself a big risk regarding the persistence and increase of negative stereotypes for all those segments of the population considered different and therefore stigmatized.

At the end of the intervention there **was a session of questions and answers** that lasted about an hour that involved the students of the masters degree and the doctorate. The main topics dealt with were *gender, homophobia, immigration and sport*. The argumentations on these subjects have focused mainly on the role of *spreading a culture of acceptance and understanding* that inevitably has to pass through traditional mass media, especially because thanks to new media these "different" individuals once invisible to most are suddenly become capable of autonomously pursuing their demands. However, all the participants agreed that the initiative of the individual is not enough, but that a horizontal and consensual dialogue is needed to achieve a step forward in the direction of a more human and correct representation of diversity.

Il progetto Codes: Brainstorming con gli stakeholder [The Codes project: Brainstorming with stakeholders]

Time and place: 12:00 - 16:00, room C2, CoRis, Via Salaria 113 Rome

Participants

1. **ALBANO ANDREINA** [Head of Press Office ARCI NAZIONALE]

Arci is the largest Italian association for social promotion committed to the issues of culture and education, peace, rights, welfare, democratic legality, time freed

2. **ANVERSA GIOVANNI** [RAI]

RAI - Radiotelevisione Italiana is the exclusive concessionaire of the Radio and Television Public Service; it creates TV, radio and satellite channels on a digital terrestrial platform.

3. **BENEDETTI ANNA** [Lega Arcobaleno]

The "Lega Arcobaleno" is a Federation of Associations working on the problems of disability, established in December 1989.

4. **BERTONI PATRIZIA** [Forum Nazionale Terzo Settore – Formation]

The "Forum Nazionale del Terzo Settore" represents 84 national second and third level organizations - for a total of over 100,000 territorial offices - operating in the areas of Volunteering, Associations, Social Cooperation, International Solidarity, Ethical Finance, Fair Trade and Trade in our country. It is a formally acknowledged social partner of the National Government.

5. **CAPPONI CLARA** [CSVnet]

CSVnet is the national association of the Voluntary Service Centers (CSVs). Founded in January 2003, it associates 64 of the 65 CSVs established thanks to the framework law on Volunteering (No. 266/1991) and represents them at national and European level.

6. **CARNEVALE GIOVANNA** [Forum Nazionale Terzo Settore – Press Office]

7. **DEL PESCO NICOLETTA** [Piaculture. Il giornale dell'intercultura a Roma]

www.piaculture.it is a registered journal, online since 2010, about foreigners who live, study and work in Rome.

8. **MARINO FRANCESCO** [Gnoti Lab – Brand Journalism]

Gnoti Lab is an organization specialized in content creation and social media management, through integrated communication strategies, in line with the new communication trends.

9. **MAURO GIUSEPPE** [Agenzia delle Entrate – Communication]

Agenzia delle entrate is a non-economic public body that operates to ensure the highest level of tax compliance. It is mainly responsible for collecting tax revenues, providing services and assistance to taxpayers and carrying out assessment and inspections aimed at countering tax evasion.

10. **MEDOLLA WALTER** [Comunicare il sociale]

Comunicare il sociale is the section dedicated to the social issues published by Corriere della Sera

11. **MELI ANNA** [COSPE ONLUS]

COSPE was founded in 1983 and is a private, secular and non-profit association. It operates in 25 countries around the world with around 70 projects alongside thousands of women and men for a change that ensures fair and sustainable development, respect for human rights, peace and justice among peoples.

12. **MILANI STEFANO** [Radio Articolo 1]

Radio Articolo 1 is the official web radio of the CGIL union. CGIL is an association representing workers. It is the oldest Italian trade union organization and is also the most representative, with over 5 million members.

13. **PASSANTINO FILIPPO** [Roma Sette - Supplemento Avvenire]

Roma Sette is the diocesan weekly of the Church of Rome: since November 1974 it arrives every Sunday as an insert of Avvenire in the newsagents, in the houses of the subscribers, in the parishes of the diocese of the Pope.

14. **SAMMARCO VITTORIO** [Professor Università Pontificia Salesiana]

The “Università Pontificia Salesiana” was promoted by the Salesian Society of San Giovanni Bosco and canonically erected near it by the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and University of Studies (now the Congregation for Catholic Education) with Decree of 3 May 1940 (Prot. N. 265/40) with the title “ Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano”.

15. **SODINI ELENA** [AVIS] and [Lecturer Master in Social Communication, Roma Tor Vergata]

AVIS (Association of Italian Volunteers of Blood) is a private non-profit association that pursues an aim of public interest: ensuring adequate availability of blood and blood components to all patients who need it. The University of Rome "Tor Vergata" began teaching activities in 1982. Designed on the model of the Anglo-Saxon campuses, it occupies an area of about 600 hectares.

16. **SPRINGHETTI PAOLA** [Journalist]

17. **TRASATTI STEFANO** [CSVnet]

18. **VERDOLINO FRANCESCO** [ARCS – Communication]

“ARCS ong associativa” was established in Rome in 1985 by the will of Arci, the largest lay association of social and cultural promotion in the world of the Italian Third Sector, founded in 1957 in Florence and spread throughout the country.

19. **WILLE FABIEN** [Professor LILLE2]

The University of Lille occupies a strategic position at the heart of Northern Europe. It boasts an outstanding cultural and scientific heritage that is etched into the Hauts-de-France Region’s history, and has established itself as a key player in the region for training, research and innovation, and commitment to social issues.

20. **ZAMPERINI NICOLA** [Gnoti Lab – Brand Journalism]

Themes

The meeting began with the greetings of the director of the CoRiS Department, Bruno Mazzara, who introduced the Codes project and welcomed the interlocutors who were given a small kit containing a pen and a notebook marked Sapienza and an abstract of the project. Each participant then presented himself so as to have the opportunity to make a brief acquaintance before the brainstorming.

The presentations were followed by an informal buffet lunch that allowed participants to get to know each other and exchange ideas during a convivial and relaxed occasion.

After lunch, Professor Gaia Peruzzi presented the various issues concerning the **communication of interculturality** on which the guests were invited, but not limited, to discuss.

The discussion focused mainly on the question of **the narration of the Other and the difficulty in representing it in images**.

The participants agreed **to define diversity as a continually shifting frontier, whose narration varies according to the medium chosen to present the story**. The exact point where this frontier is located derives from an implicit agreement between the issuer and the listener who decide to find a situation of agreement that must not be exceeded. In essence, television - first of all, due to its widespread distribution - and the other media have the task of representing diversity, but also *the moral and pedagogical responsibility* to do so within certain limits dictated by the nature of the transmission and the object in question.

The effort of the media is therefore to create *an ethical dimension of the narration* of the Other where different cultural reference points are taken into account and, to have this ethical dimension, the organizations normally produce internally a series of formal rules and regulations that are based on their guidelines.

The danger presented by new media, mainly by social media, is to *bypass this ethical dimension and directly bring the difference without mediation before public opinion, on the one hand taking advantage of the principle of freedom of expression but on the other risking to provoke adverse reactions or worse being stigmatized by an audience that does not understand the scope of the matter.*

This danger can also be considered an opportunity, because **the Other** no longer has to wait to be discovered by journalists or organizations, but **can emerge autonomously through its virtual social networks**. This emergency represents an opportunity, on the one hand for the media and on the other for society, to interface with distant life experiences without the direct intermediation of people but only of a platform. The future hoped for by the participants in the meeting, in cases like this, is that narrators and intermediaries of information do not shy away from these experiences but rather gather them, understand them and propose them to their audience through that process of ethical negotiation mentioned previously.

A separate discussion can be made for the issues concerning the **diversity** that, in certain historical moments due to specific political situations, are **overexposed and victims of a constant media presence**. In these scenarios, narrating diversity can be even more difficult because the barrier created by the prejudice becomes more dense and there is a strong risk of stigmatizing the different by labeling it *a priori*.

There is therefore also **a practical difficulty for journalists, photographers and communicators to enter these complex realities** - such as reception centers for immigrants - and to recount their condition without generating reactive attitudes of closure and mistrust.

This can happen because often chronicles, such as violence, theft or murder, are combined with social phenomena - such as immigration or gender violence - and create *a short circuit in which it is difficult to separate, in the listeners' perception, the two entities apart and dangerous generalizations may occur.*

Of this phenomenon has a particular responsibility above all **the visual representation** and the reconstruction of images of the events. The existence of a deontological regulation contained in the "Testo unico dei doveri del giornalista¹" created in 2016 indicates what can be photographed and what cannot. The problem, beyond the reference norms, also regards the journalist's ability to deeply understand the environment before hurrying to describe it and this is a possibility that can be granted in a few cases given the normal rush to produce news and information contents. To report a situation visually, some argue, it may take months of observation and immersion in a given context so as to not simply find a fortuitous scene, but to understand the experiences and relationships that exist in their normal life.

Using a metaphor, it has been pointed out that the purity of water depends on the source and the aqueduct, so the quality of the narration does not depend exclusively on the journalist or communicator who makes the final product, but also on the fact from which it starts and various intermediaries through which it passes before arriving in the hands of those who create the narration or the story.

¹ Unified text of the journalist's duties.

It was therefore agreed by all the participants that the theme of the representation of diversity is not limited to a set of responsible practices, but rather it is an activity that embraces a long series of skills and professions and that above all else we need ethical and moral reflections to understand the social importance of the informative contribution.

Each participant in the meeting was then asked to report any internal practices that his organization may take to encourage the integration of diversity in the workforce. Apart from rare cases, the answers have all been that there is a lack of specific practices for the inclusion of individuals considered "different", but many have pointed out that there are no - in their opinion - discriminatory recruitment models in their organizations, so that potentially anyone could have participated in internal recruitment and integration processes.

Competences and Expertises

For a better understanding, the skills that have been proposed during the meeting will be divided into three categories: techniques, cultural and individual skills.

Technical skills mainly revolve around the use of new technologies.

Knowledge of the Internet, social networks and search engines, the basic dynamics of the algorithms of these platforms are considered essential.

Communicators of interculturality should *know in depth the virtual places of information exchange*, not only for communication activities and relations management, but also and above all to stay up-to-date and to monitor spontaneous "emergencies" that take place on the network.

The ability to perform fact checking and manage crisis situations with knowledge.

Cross-level basic IT skills, including copywriting, small photo-retouching capabilities, creating slides and captivating PDFs and managing small databases.

With regard to technical skills, we refer to the fact that some have expressed the belief that the more the technology will progress, the less we will need information technology skills since there are already countless services and applications - even for smartphones - that with little effort and little technical competence can provide high quality products.

More words were spent on the matter of **cultural competences**.

Given the sensitive nature of the theme of diversity, different knowledge is needed, ranging from *purely theoretical topics* to *specific information on the environment of the Third Sector and communication concerning social issues* more generally.

Therefore, for cultural competences we mean a vast series of skills ranging from *specific cultural tools of understanding and explanation of social phenomena* to the *ability to evaluate the aims of the narration*. In other words, we need *the ability to translate things that are unspeakable or difficult to understand for certain*

segments of the public, in things that can be said and above all understandable with the decoding tools in the hands of the spectators.

To achieve this complex objective, many have agreed that the only way is *a solid theoretical foundation on the history, politics and society* in which we live.

Understanding of the dynamics of traditional media and new media especially in relation to the room left to minorities.

Knowledge of laws, norms and professional deontology regarding journalism and the world of information.

Finally, it has been reported by many people *the necessity to know the sector of social communication and the majority of players that compose it and live within it*, not only for a matter of theoretical knowledge of the industry but also to *properly manage relationships and know how* to group together on shared themes comparing the work done and, in some way, decreasing the self-referentiality that is often typical of the area of associationism.

The **individual skills** that emerged are similar to those required for several other occupations where *creativity, propositiveness and problem-solving* are needed.

Almost all the participants stressed the importance of *an attitude aimed at enhancing and cultivating relations both inside and outside the organization*. Ability to overcome the “taboo” and therefore *great openness of mind* that is needed when it is necessary to *communicate with people with a disease or/and difficult and complex past*.

Great skills to immerse yourself in contexts and set aside prejudices to make room for experiences of complete absorption, and *a strong sense of empathy sensitivity in respect of the Other*.

Above all, *the ability to identify within each problem a corresponding opportunity*: for example, to see how diversity and therefore the confrontation with a certain conception of "normality" can produce inclusive practices and thus bring society and culture a step forward on the path to the cancellation of discrimination. Finally another fundamental characteristic for different people is summarized by the term *curiosity*: conceived as *the ability to not stop in front of obstacles, to continue to investigate and understand and not to be content with what is on the surface but to always go beyond to get to a deep and heartfelt narration*.

Concluding notes

The event, both in the seminar part and in the brainstorming, was considered a success by all the participants, receiving several appreciations.

The students of the master's and doctorate courses showed great interest and participation during the speech by Professor Wille and took the opportunity to deal with different cultural realities and a more international approach on communications and journalism issues.

The participants in the brainstorming were proactive and enthusiastic because the occasion allowed them to express and ponder on important issues related to their daily profession. The possibility of making formal

and informal networking, exchanging contacts or reviving relationships already established in the past was especially appreciated.

All stakeholders asked to receive a detailed account of the day in order to have ideas on how to improve their internal and external communication and training processes. Everyone expressed interest in the possibility of repeating the experience, preferably in several sessions, in order to deepen one by one the many themes that emerged during the confrontation.

Having approached various organizations in the university world has also reawakened their interest in young graduates in our communication courses, to the point that many have shown interest in the idea of planning specific meetings with students during lessons and to set up, through the appropriate channels already established by Sapienza, prospects for future collaboration and integration into the world of work.