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Toward a politics of hope



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Photo:

Emil Otto Hoppe - Rhinoceros, 1940 (collezione privata Pomilio Blumm)



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**Migrations and
interculturalism**
#1/2017

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Editorial

The future as a public good

by Franco Pomilio

Pomilio Blumm CEO

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Twenty years ago today, Arjun Appadurai “Modernity at Large” formulated an anthropological theory on “cultural global flows” that would give rise to a new approach to this field. Nowadays, this famous American anthropologist of Indian origin continues to develop keen and original visions, providing a cultural perspective not only on the present, but increasingly, on the future as well. ICS met with him during a lecture that he held in Milan at the end of the round of meetings for “Future Ways of Living”. This presented an opportunity to discuss matters regarding Europe, ethics, and modernity, and to discover that when dealing with culture there is a constant flow of change and things never remain as they are.

The future is the main topic of this publication. The future has the power to pave the way for dreams and hopes, and to act as an antidote to the side effects of one of the most pressing and delicate phenomena of our time: migration. Still, despite the utopian nature of this topic, Appadurai’s speech is not idealistic at all; on the contrary, it is very logical and concrete. If social reality is born unpredictably from individual aspirations, and aspirations are

born from different “visions of the future,” it would be irrational and useless to hinder them in any way.

Cultural diversity is no different from biodiversity: it should be nurtured and cultivated, because I cannot know today what I will desire tomorrow. If I don’t leave room for imagination, I inevitably will be short-sighted about the future, with the risk of overlooking possible visions that may turn out to be beneficial for everyone. This is the reason why flows of ideas and people should in no way be limited, especially when they are brought about by extremely serious and dramatic causes, such as war, persecution, and poverty.

The task of our institutions is to guarantee equal dignity to all possible “images of the future” – namely to all dreams and hopes. Institutions need to ensure that everyone has a “right to an imagination” as well as individual aspirations, and to ensure a cultural environment where the ability to deliver their own visions, with a bottom-up process, is manifested in a public negotiations arena. These visions can then become decisions and shared perspectives, because the future remains a public good, one which we can imagine and shape together.



The right to imagination

by Daniela Panosetti

A photograph of the Statue of Liberty on a boat deck. The statue is in the center, standing on its pedestal. The water is a calm, brownish-grey color. In the foreground, the white metal railing of the boat is visible, with a blue deck below it. The sky is a pale, hazy yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Twenty years after *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai reflects on how cultural flows have changed in the face of the worldwide rise of new fears. His proposal: a new policy of hope is needed, which can accommodate to each possible vision of the future.

Arjun Appadurai is exactly as you would imagine him to be: an elegant and amiable university teacher. His way of speaking is calm, measured, and conciliatory, regardless of the buzzing chaos around him. His gaze, intently fixed on the interlocutor, suddenly lights up to give way to a smile when he begins to answer, at last, unveiling one by one the numerous ideas gathered.

Our conversation after his lecture in Milan for *Meet the Media Guru* flowed lightly, limpidly, even pleurably, despite the fact that the topics revolved around fear, nationalism and inequalities. Perhaps, it is precisely this lighthearted attitude that allows the famous anthropologist, born in India and for many years now living in the United States, to speak about concepts in terms of a utopia, such as “the right to hope” or “the power of imagination” without ever sounding banal or falling victim to pure wishful thinking. On the contrary, Appadurai manages to make these concepts plausible and possible, if not even downright necessary.

Twenty years ago, it was he who developed the famous sociological theory of global cultural flows. Terms such as ethnoscape, mediascapes, ideoscapes, technoscape, and finanscape soon became perfect labels for indicating the ever-expanding and unpredictable flows of people, symbols, ideas, technologies, and economic resources that move across the whole globe. Appadurai is still the one who dares to speak about the future as a “fact”, albeit a cultural fact, i.e., something that not only can be thought out but also planned and built.

The whole problem is: how do we do it? Appadurai's answer is simple, but not naive: we must build an environment that can accept and nurture every possible vision of the future, so as to guarantee everyone their

Hope is not just an emotion. It is an ability. Something we learn to exert if we are encouraged to. And, as such, it can also be exhausted if not used.

right to dream and to hope. These are two incredibly powerful forces, acting as catalysts behind the migrants' desperate journeys, and also standing as a justification for the need to change lives for the better, and that of the world as well.

Twenty years ago you formulated your global cultural flows theory starting from the premise that the imaginary dimension plays the central role, or at least has a strong influence, in shaping social and cultural facts. Today some philosophers maintain that we are experiencing some kind of a “new realism”. Are we going back to a new modernity?

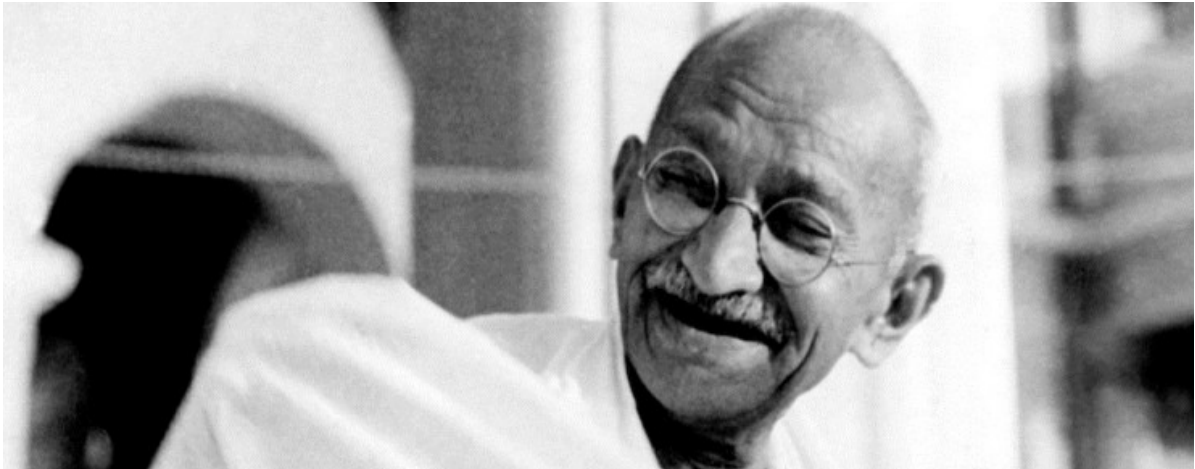
Actually, I hold the opinion that we never really abandoned modernity. The whole idea of post-modernism as a kind of break to a new era was never convincing for me. I have always considered it as a sort of variation on the theme of modernity, and I keep thinking this way. And yet, the issue about a “*return of realism*” is important. Thanks to social media and technology, our “documentary capacity” expanded incredibly. Not only official media, but also common people are now able to

SYMBOL OF HOPE

In the previous pages, the Statue of Liberty in New York, seen from the ferry-boat (photo: picography, Tasja).

On the right, a group of Indian children (photo: istock)





record and narrate their everyday life, their personal events, their own world, and their ideas—just think about citizen journalism and similar phenomena.

I do not, however, believe that this necessarily entails a sort of supremacy of realism over the sphere of play or imagination. On the contrary, I believe that this comeback of realism in our everyday domain is somehow saturated by our ability to structure, narrate, select and elaborate what we see and do. I do not, therefore, believe in realism with a small “r”, rather, in realism with a capital “R”—similar to what Lacan teaches us. Anyway, our reality is deeply imbued with our mediation capacity, which is changing together with technology.

Our life grows more and more immersed in

We cannot assume that dreams have to be the same for everyone. This homogeneity of imagination would be more like a nightmare.

our visual culture. It has been calculated that the number of images surrounding us will soon be in the order of billions. How to interpret and govern this “visual ocean” is one of the biggest challenges of our future and requires new modes of imagination. Let us think of a recent phenomenon like PokémonGo. This shows that people are looking for ways to interact with their environment playfully, and in so doing they are actively re-shaping their environment by inventing new forms of mediation.

All in all, I believe that what we are witnessing is more than a just a return of realism. It is the birth of a more complex way of interaction between realism and fiction, where each part influences the other in ways not easily foreseeable.

Let us speak about ethnoscapes. Today's growing nationalism presents a cultural and political situation where the link between space and identity seems to be growing stronger. Are we facing a rebirth of the concept of territory?

Without a doubt, both in Europe and in the United States, we are witnessing a general

CIVIL RESISTANCE

In his latest book, Appadurai devotes an entire chapter to the figure of Gandhi (photo: Wikimedia, public domain)

Imagination is a very powerful force, both for refugees and those who are receiving these fluxes. We must find a way to shape it constructively, so that it does not give way to hatred, fear, and rejection.

cultural shift toward nationalistic and xenophobic thinking. And without a doubt, the concept of territory plays a role in this. People react with growing anxiety to the radicalization not only of migrants and refugee influxes, but also to terrorism, and they try to seek a solid ground in values such as territory, family, and nation. However, I do not think that this could cause a resurfacing of the idea of territory in its traditional sense. As thinkers like Claude Levi-Strauss and Roman Jakobson taught us, in culture, when something is new, everything is new. The world of meaning is relational: no meaning exists on its own and when an element changes, everything else does as well.

This holds true also for concepts such as territory, soil, or nation: when a change occurs, it cannot be reversed. These entities can be reconsidered and brought back to life in a new form; however, they cannot be re-established, because the ground has literally moved under our feet in the meantime. Like Proust says: *le temps perdu*—the time lost—is, in every sense, lost. We can try to recreate it or recount its stories, but neither will produce the same results. This is also why cultural anxiety is growing, because we

know that our efforts will never be complete, yet there is no way to go back and change our direction.

Brexit can certainly be labeled as an example of nationalistic anxiety. What are your thoughts about Europe today, specifically speaking, about policies of community cohesion? Is it still possible to think of a trans-European or pan-European identity?

Of course, Brexit, together with other bouts of nationalistic anxiety caused by new migratory waves, preys upon the original idea of Europe as formulated by Jean Monnet and the other fathers of the Union, so much so that it is making it sound almost unreal or delusional. Nonetheless, I think that European nation-states do not have a choice. Everything today is in circulation, be it in the field of economy, of work, or of migrant crisis, and no one can deal with these burdens on their own.

I also think that the main problem does not, in fact, lie in a shared safety policy, or a shared strategy toward refugees. Rather, the problem lies in the future of the euro and, specifi-

Meet the Media Guru - Designing the future

Arjun Appadurai's lecture about "Anthropology and design" was the last appointment of the cycle of events "*Future Ways of Living*", which was held during the months May-July 2016 in Milan by Meet the Media Guru, in collaboration with "La Triennale di Milano". *Meet the Media Guru* is an annual conference carried out by the Camera di Commercio in Milan with contributions by Regione Lombardia and Provincia di Milano. It was launched by Maria Grazia Mattei in 2005 and in the last ten years has become an essential event dedicated to innovation and new media in Italy. From its very beginning, *Meet the Media Guru* has welcomed 24 thousand participants with around 44 talks by various famous figures from the field of digital and media culture such as: Manuel Castells, Jane McGonigal, Donald Normal, and Edgar Morin. *Meet the Media Guru* also resulted in a platform for a professional exchange of ideas, a think tank, and an editorial project for the publishing house Egea.

cally speaking, in the future of the economic union. The economic union will have control over the euro in the long run, benefitting from it in the meantime, but it will also suffer the consequences—as was the case for Greece. The richest countries, like Germany, together with the European Central Bank, should reflect seriously on this issue. For example, it would be a good idea to create a European Fund for refugees. Nations will be able to contribute not only through taxes but also through direct investments, and the Fund will be employed in case there is a real need. This could be, however, just the starting point for a broader evolution, which, in my view, should be somehow carried out.

One of Europe's biggest challenges will be managing migratory fluxes from the outside. How do imaginative processes influence this phenomenon?

Imagination, evidently, is a very powerful force, both for those who are coming and those who are receiving these fluxes. Consequently, we

must make an effort to find a way to shape it constructively, so that it does not give way, as it is happening now, to hatred, fear, and rejection. For example, it does not make sense to draw a sharp line between economic migrants and refugees, as this is a false opposition. People want to improve their lives—which means more safety, more assurance, and a better future, for oneself and for their children.

Europe has been for centuries a land where people could freely migrate, both within the continent and beyond. I think it is a bit self-righteous to want to end the waltz now and to keep everyone glued to their seat, hoping that those who do not have a seat will simply vanish; this is just not going to happen. It is time we acknowledge that imagination and hope belong to everyone and not just to a few; therefore a "*politics of generosity*" must be implemented.

Despite what one hears about the European economy and its contradictions, Europe still remains a rich and privileged place—not really residing at the bottom of the global economy. The means are there, so by helping

ROOTS OF IDENTITY

Photo taken from the series "My home, my prison", by Laetitia Vancon, winner of the Blumm Prize Future Frames 2014





each other the wellbeing of nations will not necessarily drop.

Your latest book is about the future. Some nations, like Sweden, are organizing ministerial programmes to govern this change “top-down” through institutional means. The book, on the contrary, suggests that actual change is “bottom-up”, it comes from the people. How can these two ways to “plan the future” meet?

I really think that this issue is pivotal for the future of democracy. In fact, if change is a totally spontaneous, bottom-up process, it will be somehow lacking, because it is simply utopic to think otherwise—there are

It is time we acknowledge that imagination and hope belong to everyone and not just to a few; therefore a “politics of generosity” must be implemented.

problems that are too big. On the other side, excessive institutional control risks stifling at birth some “ideas of the future” which could prove fruitful, if not downright revolutionary. Consequently, planning the future must be done jointly, those who have money, the means, and an education need to take it upon themselves to give new ideas adequate space for growing and developing. In order to do so, however, one must overcome several obstacles. Firstly, it would be necessary to acknowledge that people have complex aspirations and that all of them are legitimate. That is, common people do not just want the basic things such as safety, or wealth, but in fact they too have complex expectations about their future, about the desires of their children, and where they would want to live. Secondly, we have to acknowledge that every person's “vision of the future” is different. We cannot start by assuming these dreams have to be the same for everyone, always mirroring someone else's dream—the commonly known American dream, or the European dream—because this homogeneity of imagination would be more like a nightmare.

RECURRING CYCLES

Museum of Ellis Island, New York: trunks of migrants in the early 1900s (photo: Fernando DC Ribeiro, CC BY-NC)

Europe has been for centuries a land where people could freely migrate. It is a bit self-righteous to want to end the waltz now and to keep everyone glued to their seat, hoping that those who do not have a seat will simply vanish; this is just not going to happen.

Cultural diversity should be recognized as a true asset. We need different ideas, as we need different languages. It's like biodiversity, stifling it is not convenient because no one can know what we are going to need in the future. If you remove cultural diversity today, tomorrow it may not be available. Visions of the future have to be nurtured as much as possible, because we can never know where the next great idea will come from.

Therefore we must create an environment where everyone, who is able to hope, dream or imagine a future, is granted access. Obviously, there must be negotiation forums as well, where different ideas are discussed peacefully, since in order to be carried out, ideas have to be systematized. Institutions should focus on making processes and debates easier, without pre-determining them.

Your book also mentions the necessity of an “ethic of possibility” opposed to an “ethic of probability”: what is the difference between the two, and what role does hope play in this new ethical system?

Hope is precisely the essence for an ethic of possibility. Probability ethic is based on numbers; its nature is statistical and strictly linked to the knowledge of experts, whose projections are destined to be translated into action by politics.

Possibility, on the other hand, is more qualitative and more elusive by nature—more narrative. The point is not defining what could happen (and how likely it is to happen), rather, the point is leaving the path open for what could be. Hope for me, therefore, is not just an emotion or a feeling. Just like desire, it is an ability which one has. It's something we learn to exert if we are encouraged to. It does not come out by itself. And, as such, it can also be exhausted if not used.

A political, social, and cultural environment is, therefore, needed where people are encouraged to hope. Because the different images of the future come from hope itself, as well as the drive and the possibility to negotiate them. All of this; however, does not have anything to do with the world of numbers and probability, but rather with life, relations, and aspirations. In one simple sentence it would be: “the right to imagination”.



An anthropologist of the future

By definition, the future is different than the present. There are cases, however, where distances become smaller, and temporal horizons meet. Such an instance can be seen with Arjun Appadurai, professor at NYU, and founding father of the “anthropology of the future” who was able—thanks to analytical insight and an all-encompassing perspective—to interpret the reality yet to come and its models. Consequently, one could highlight how certain phenomena are destined to influence society, as well as the ways to give meaning and an identity to it. More than 20 years ago, Appadurai built a theory for migration flows and its social consequences: ethnoscaples, technoscaples, financescaples, mediascaples and ideoscaples. All five were seen as freely combinable, and capable to reinstate new and sometimes temporary identities. Today, more than ever, the theories expressed first in “Modernity at Large”, and then in “Fear of Small Numbers” and “The Future as a Cultural Fact”, are adequate to explain our massive migration flows, the creation of transnational global communities, and the circulation of hybrid symbols. In fact, Appadurai’s approach mirrors his own life: Indian by birth, American by adoption, and “global” by vocation. All of these elements shaped Appadurai’s pioneering thought, one which managed to observe and understand the processes beyond the structures, the connections beyond single points, and the conscience both of the universal sphere and the individual one.

Sara Fiadone

(S)Marketing From social to social media

by Oscar Blumm

Accepting, sharing: the vocabulary of social media and social communication are getting increasingly similar. Since accepting means letting something inside our daily lives, without intermediaries, which it can be fruitful in communicating themes such as rights, integration, and equality.

From the social dimension to social media values: this is a good way to summarize the evolution of communication concerning rights, inclusion, equality. At the end of the XXth century, institutions were preaching with an almost paternalistic tone about living with diversity, so as not to exclude, for example, disabled people. Nowadays, however, integration of cultures, religions, or gender, is a strategic driver in brand communication. So, what happened? Digital revolution happened. The web was born. Social networks boomed. And everyone suddenly became a leading player in communication. “Easy to say”, could be someone’s reply. Actually, it’s easier said than done. The Internet made us closer regardless of our geographical location, but social media made us so irrespective of our roles that we are becoming even more used to an increasing absence of intermediaries. Who has something to say, simply does so. Obviously, the consequences

are not always and not only positive. One of contemporary journalism’s biggest challenges is to distinguish the reliable from the unreliable. On the other hand, we must admit that voices coming from the web are gaining a bottom-up legitimacy, which is difficult to find elsewhere. Take influencers: common people who are followed precisely because they are common, end up becoming more frequently the official “faces” of brands and marketing campaigns. What has all this got to do with social communication? It is a matter of process: we are more predisposed to listen to those who speak directly, often ironically, even when dealing with serious issues. Since it is the same way we would speak about it. We welcome a new social value only if we see it as belonging to our everyday life, and no longer as something external: if this is true, then facilitating this process should be the first objective of those who, regardless of

their position, strive for universal recognition of these values. Actually, accepting and sharing values are the most recurring actions in the social world: you accept a friendship request and you share contents. Thereby these relationships, even if virtual, are becoming part of our daily flow. It is precisely this new “social attitude” that should be promoted among citizens through public communication, which should also inform the management of each channel tool, and and activity—especially for themes that are commonly referred to as “social”. Discussing integration or gender equality not “through” social networks, but “as it is done” on social networks, does not mean lessening their importance; instead, it means acknowledging an on-going and growing opportunity. Hopefully until the moment when “accepting” and “sharing” won’t be only part of Facebook’s vocabulary.



هنا من وفاء



Lesbos, Europe's outpost

by Spyros **Galinos***

The lack of a policy for refugee admission and the fatal error in judgement: thinking that the problem lies in refugees, and not in the wars they are fleeing from. These are the reasons behind the inertia Europe finds itself in, unable to understand that accepting migrants is not only an act of courage but also a source of happiness.

(*) The contribution is a transcript approved by the author of his speech delivered during the 2016 edition of Oscar Pomilio Forum



Happiness is found within ourselves, and not in our wallets. I have always believed this to be true and it proved so once again when I found out that Lesbos, my island, a minuscule point on the globe, is economically stronger than countries such as England, France, or Austria, and maybe even stronger than all of them combined. However, realizing this did not make me happy. Why? Because I heard the president of the United States (*Barack Obama at the time of the speech, editor's note*) say that his country was willing to accept 80000 refugees, while other states proclaimed they were ready to welcome 16000 people for one year, or 5000, or 2500, or even 1500. I kept thinking to myself: my island is surely stronger, because as of today it has welcomed more than 550000 people, and all of this was achieved through love, humanity, solidarity, and most importantly through the patriotic spirit of the Greek nation. The citizens of my country, regardless of the devastation they felt through 7 years of crisis, found the strength to carry the weight of this pan-European problem on their own.

Errors of perspective

Let's face it: Where does the problem lie, in the refugees themselves, or in the bombs landing on their homes and over their heads, forcing them to flee their lands in hope of a better future? It is clear that the issue does not lie with the mothers paying thousands of euros to cross the Aegean Sea to reach Europe. They risk their lives in the most inhumane conditions just so that they can save the lives of their own children. Unfortunately, we are facing an error in our assessment of the real issues, consequently considering refugees in purely numerical terms and labeling them as "the problem". We also add more errors to this primary fatal mistake as well. We do not take into account that these people are victims of the policies established in their own countries. These are the countries where injustice is legitimate and where war prevails. What actions are we taking when faced with these people who are fighting to survive? Unfortunately, we leave the management of migration and of migrants' lives in the hands of human trafficking organizations. Instead of taking the easiest course of

MARE NOSTRUM

In the opening page, an abandoned boat in Lampedusa; on the top, a boat full of migrants crossing the Mediterranean (photo: iStock)

As of today my island has welcomed more than 550000 people, and all of this was achieved through love, humanity, solidarity, and most importantly through the patriotic spirit of the Greek nation.



**Spyros
Galinos**

Mayor of the Island
of Lesbos, president
of the Greek region of
North Aegean

action by identifying the problem and then finding a solution for it, many states simply choose not to intervene. We resort to an oversimplification of the issue: “refugees are the problem, not the wars”. If the identification process was carried out in an organized fashion in Turkey, the location where refugees initially begin their journey, none of the refugees would go to criminal organizations, and no mother would be forced to risk the lives of her children. This humanitarian issue cannot be handled by only a few countries such as Greece or Italy. We need a system which protects all parties, and one which involves all countries since this is an emergency that touches everyone.

For a better life

We must be one big family. These people are fleeing from poverty and pursuing the European dream. It is precisely at this moment that our island Lesbos becomes Europe, and in their eyes we represent an opportunity for a better life. Each and every day, these desperate journeys take the lives of hopeful adults and children, and even the lives of the unborn babies

of the many pregnant women present as well. Upon reaching our coasts, they get off the boats by kissing the ground and rejoicing at the mere fact that they are still alive, even if they have lost their loved ones or companions along the way. This is happiness, and we have experienced it every day with every life saved. What is Europe doing? It is making this happiness feel as if it is in vain. It is closing the borders and blocking any access to them, while believing that by doing so the people's despair will slowly dissipate. It is like building a wall to stop a flood, and believing that this is the way to hold back the water forever. Europe has yet to learn that walls are eventually going to crumble, and if we persist with such an attitude we will see our future drown. The future cannot be built upon corpses, and happiness cannot be built upon pain.

A bed, a hug

Fortunately, not all Europe is reacting this way. There are also those who speak with a clear voice, whole nations showing their solidarity, such as Italy, and many volunteers offering their help with their humanity.



Every one of them gave us happiness each day—happiness for every life we had a chance to save, for every hug of a child we received, and for every bed we found for the mothers and their young.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Afghan refugees waiting for registration in Lesbos (photo: International Federation of Red Cross, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The experience in Lesbos has been exemplary. In 2016, during the peak of the Greek crisis, when the fear of paying next month's wages was high, 200 to 400 people were arriving each day, with this number continually increasing, until it reached 2000 and even 10000. Every one of them travelling to reach Europe gave us happiness each day—happiness for every life we had a chance to save, for every hug of a child we received, and for every bed we found for the mothers and their young. We did our best to welcome the refugees and to help them, as we were aware that our actions were necessary. However, we were not prepared for such an emergency, because there was no European policy for accepting refugees. We created such a policy from nothing, we the citizens of Lesbos, through dedication, commitment, and humanity. Each one us, every citizen of Lesbos, made this commitment and will honor it until the end without thinking of the economic cost it incurred. When journalists ask me what we need, in terms of financial help, I refuse to give a price to people's lives. I do not want to do it, it is not right and it must not be this way. I ask of Europe

that it finds again its identity, and to once again be a place where policies are based on humanity, not on an abstract idea of planning. A place where people still have a voice, a story, and a power.

The strength of hope

Many are asking me what is going to happen to tourism on the island. Lesbos has the sea, and it is full of beauty, culture, architecture, thermal waters, and wonderful beaches. I am convinced that tourism will not suffer at all, because I believe that there are many people ready to value the strength and courage we demonstrated in taking this pan-European issue upon our shoulders. We lost none of our beauties, in fact, we can now show the whole world the beauty of our people. There is still hope in the world, and it is within people. The strength of hope uniting refugees, and the volunteers rescuing them now and in the future is what represents the most important and truest reason to come visit our beautiful land.



The best of times, the worst of times

by Kristina Persson*



Good national governance is not enough. If we want to face the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world and to heal the contradictions of our time, we need to create an actual system of global governance, based on solidarity as a shared value.

(*) The contribution is a transcript approved by the author of her speech delivered during the 2016 edition of Oscar Pomilio Forum

Our transition towards a sustainable world requires a new spirit of solidarity. As J.F. Kennedy once said: “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future”.

We live in an increasingly interconnected world, in many different ways. But we also live in an age of growing divergences. Our international and European organizations have inclusive and sustainable growth as their motto, but we are actually drifting apart, due to growing inequalities within nations. Sweden is no exception, but since we started from a very high level of equality, we are also today better off than most other countries. Today, at this conference (*Oscar Pomilio Forum 2015, editor's note*), we are talking about happiness as a fundamental dimension of life. As I see it, the role of politics and government is to create a well-functioning society with good governance in order to create the best possible conditions for happiness.

Between past and present

We live in a time of great contradictions. We largely know what should be done, but in fact we do not have the tools to do it. And sometimes not even the will. There is a quote by Charles Dickens that I like very much. It is the beginning of *A Tale of Two Cities*, the two cities being between Paris and London

in the period of the French Revolution: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness. [...] We had everything before us, we had nothing before us”.

I think that this sentence captures well the spirit also of our time. Inequalities in France led to the revolution of 1789. A somewhat later revolution – the industrial one – created new types of inequalities between the richest and the poor, who flocked to the growing cities or toiled in the mines. At that time Sweden was one of the poorest nations in Europe, if not the poorest; more than the 25% of the population emigrated to the US during the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century another writer, Ignazio Silone, described similar conditions in Italy. Reading the stories from the lives of Abruzzo farmers in the novel *Fontamara*, reminds you of the incredible social transformations that took place in Italy in the first half of the 20th century. The answer – eventually – was democracy and the development of a welfare state. Sweden came late in the process of industrialization, which was probably an advantage for us, both economically



**Kristina
Persson**

Swedish politician,
Minister for Strategic
Development until
2016



STORIES OF CHANGE

Above, a portrait of Charles Dickens (photo: iStock); in the opening page, John F. Kennedy together with his children in the Oval Office (photo: Wikimedia, public domain)

and socially. The hardships that accompanied the transition from an agricultural society to a industrial never reached the proportions that were seen in other countries, such as England and even Italy. Our popular movements and civil society, including trade unions, were strong and able to provide a solid foundation based on solidarity and justice for the new Sweden. The famous “Swedish model”, based on high taxes and good institutions, was therefore constructed from the 1930s and onwards.

More connected, more unequal

Nowadays, for the first time in history, all of us share de facto the same world, connected as we are by technology, trade, communications and culture. But we are connected on a very unequal basis. Globalization has led to the reduction of poverty and to increasing similarities between countries. But it has also led to strong imbalances within countries and between social and human needs on the one hand, and global market forces on the other. Enormous changes have taken place, and in a short period of time. The era defined by industrial and collective forms of production

has reached its peak. Today, the 80 richest people in the world own as much wealth as the poorest half of the population: 3.5 billion people. And the economic and technological opportunities continue to push towards increasing inequality. Worldwide, 60 million people are internally displaced or in exile because of war, and many more have left their homes in search of a way to make a living. As Minister for Strategic Development, my job is to develop the foundations for a long-term thinking and future strategies within the Swedish Government. During my first year of work, we focused on three areas: the green transition to a fossilfree welfare state, the future of work and the need for global governance. Good governance is a prerequisite for development, on all levels: local, national, regional or global. Global governance is probably our toughest challenge. It is a new and complex playing field for politics, that demands new ways of working together. In a world of low trust, we need to reconcile macro-economic conditions with social needs. There is a need to develop long-term ways to support the creation of jobs, growth, ecological sustainability and inclusive, social

Global governance is probably our toughest challenge. It is a new and complex playing field for politics, that demands new ways of working together.

development. All at the same time. This is possible, but it is necessary to have the right policy instruments and a close cooperation between different stakeholders. [...]

Reversing the direction

I am hopeful about Sweden and the Nordic countries, because we score very high in three very important concepts for good governance: institutions, trust and innovation. But of course this is something we have to fight for all the time. [...]

Even if a nation state has good governance, it doesn't have all the answers. We live in an interconnected world, where the conditions for international cooperation are changing due to geo-political and geo-economic shifts. In the worst case this intervening period that we are in could carry on for quite some time and be dominated by crisis and conflicts. Inequality, unemployment and a globalised world are breeding grounds for populism and xenophobia. In the old industrialised countries a reaction has set in: people are looking backwards, wanting to recreate what used to be: nationalism, the way of doing things in the old days, attacking

international institutions and regional cooperation such as the European Union. These reactions are futile and dangerous and they seriously risk delaying democratic and social development. Ignorance is part of the problem and it should be addressed by politicians and the civil society together. The European project is facing major challenges, stemming from many different but coinciding problems and threats: the ongoing economic crisis—in the wake of the great financial crisis from 2008—is one; Europe's inability to cope with migration is another; and the growth of nationalist and right-wing populist parties is a third, just to mention a few. The austerity policies have resulted in too low levels of demand and investment, that have delayed economic recovery. At the same time, we face enormous investment needs for the green transition, if we are to succeed in staying as far below the 2°C limit for global warming as possible, in accordance with the Paris agreement. The ongoing changes require a major political response from leaders of society in all fields – political, economic, social and cultural. Not just now, but for many years to come.

BOTTOM-UP REVOLUTIONS

On the right, a detail of the famous painting by Eugène Delacroix, "Liberty Leading the People", 1830 (credits: Wikimedia, public domain)



Worldwide, 60 million people are internally displaced or in exile because of war, and many more have left their homes in search of a way to make a living.

The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement have the potential to stand out as important milestones on the way to more sustainable models for our societies, not because the agreements themselves contain commitments that will save humanity from disasters, but because they are strong signals of the direction in which our world is heading, which in itself will trigger action.

Politics is solidarity

For a long time, shared responsibility and solidarity have lost out in the age of neo-liberalism. But no society can exist without solidarity. Everyone understands this: it's the forms and the reach of solidarity that all politics is about. Common people have to be mobilized for the change. People need to be seen and respected. In a democracy it is absolutely fundamental that they understand the time they live in. There are glimmers of light. One is the growing interest taken by the business community and the financial sector in the movement towards a sustainable world. We see this very clearly in the transition to climate

sustainability. And even social issues are no longer a matter of isolated CSR initiatives, they represent a new way of thinking based on the combined insight of what the world needs. The strong interest from both business representatives and the civil society in the 2030 Agenda sends an important signal about partnership: a world that is not sustainable is not in the interest of business either. A change in society towards solidarity does not happen overnight. It requires determined political efforts to build up new forms of cooperation that better match our current reality. We need a more social economy and the mobilization of people. We need cooperation between nations of the world, between sectors and different interests. But to succeed both in Europe and globally, our European cooperation must be reinvigorated. A divided and weak Europe can neither deliver jobs and good lives to people, nor global governance. Our transition towards a sustainable world must be built on a new spirit of solidarity and cooperation. And as President Kennedy once said: "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future".



Pomilio Blumm Prize®

art in progress



sky ARTE HD

The entrepreneurial voice Cohesion and development

by Vincenzo Boccia

The future, inclusiveness and openness: these are some of the keywords inspiring the new chairmanship of Confindustria. The objective is to restore the original social value of the entrepreneurial world by focusing on the younger generations, investments, and solidarity.



**Vincenzo
Boccia**

President of
Confindustria and
CEO of Arti Grafiche
Boccia SpA

My first year as President of Confindustria has been challenging, but also very rewarding. Through the various meetings I was involved in, I was able to get in contact with our associate members. I had a chance to hear our local presidents share their ideas and projects, and to personally take part in several key moments for our Association. This activity helped us steer a straight course and Confindustria joined in on the main priorities. I'm particularly satisfied, for instance, with the general mobilization of the aid system for the area in central Italy that was affected by the earthquake and natural disasters of the last months. The Fabbrica Solidale Fund we established will help to relaunch the production of industrial activities and to support cultural institutions, schools, and universities.

We are attempting to spread an economic and political vision

looking towards the country's future, while also trying to understand if the ideas that we support, endorse, or claim, are going to be accepted by the outside world as well. As a matter of fact we, as Confindustria, do not propose any trade-off to politics. This fact is largely demonstrated with the acknowledgement of the Government with the decision to focus on development factors rather than on the industrial fields. Should we indicate a priority, not only valid for companies but also for our country's future, we

would focus on young people whose unemployment rate is not consistent with the current situation of a large industrialised country as is our own. Half of the young people in Italy have no jobs, especially in some areas of Southern Italy. We cannot afford to lose a generation, nor can we allow ourselves to give up on our future. That is the reason why we proposed a big project aimed at supporting the entry of young people into the job market based on the reduction of the tax wedge for companies that

Should we indicate a priority, not only valid for companies, but also for our country's future, we would focus with no hesitation on young people.



SHARED VALUES

Above, the opening speech by Vincenzo Boccia during the 2017 Assembly of Confindustria - General Confederation of Italian Industry (photo: Pomilio)

are hiring them under certain conditions. This is a proposal which aims towards a more open and inclusive society as a way to tackle inequality and poverty.

Among the challenges we need to overcome is the small size still characterizing our manufacturing system. The saying “*small is better*” does not stand true anymore for us—as the crisis has made it clear. For this reason we believe in the Elite project, and we are committed to developing financial literacy that may support companies' development without having to take out bank loans. We have been working on the enlargement of corporate networks by pointing at the opportunities provided by Industria 4.0 combined with a wide range of tools—such as the Jobs Act, hyper and super amortisations, tax credit and the so called “Nuova Sabatini”—that are star-

We can recognize by looking back that we have achieved a lot. But by looking ahead, we can see that we still have many ideas and projects that need implementing.

ting to show their effectiveness. This is shown by the increased investments in production machinery and technology for a high added value industry requiring intensive investments and productivity.

Our contribution to the international forums should not be overlooked. During the forums agreements were made with the Federation of German Industries, and we also collaborated with the European corporate associations (Business Europe) and the highly industrialized Countries of the World (G7) –

hosted at our headquarters in Rome – to draft documents in favour of the economic freedom and against any kind of protectionism.

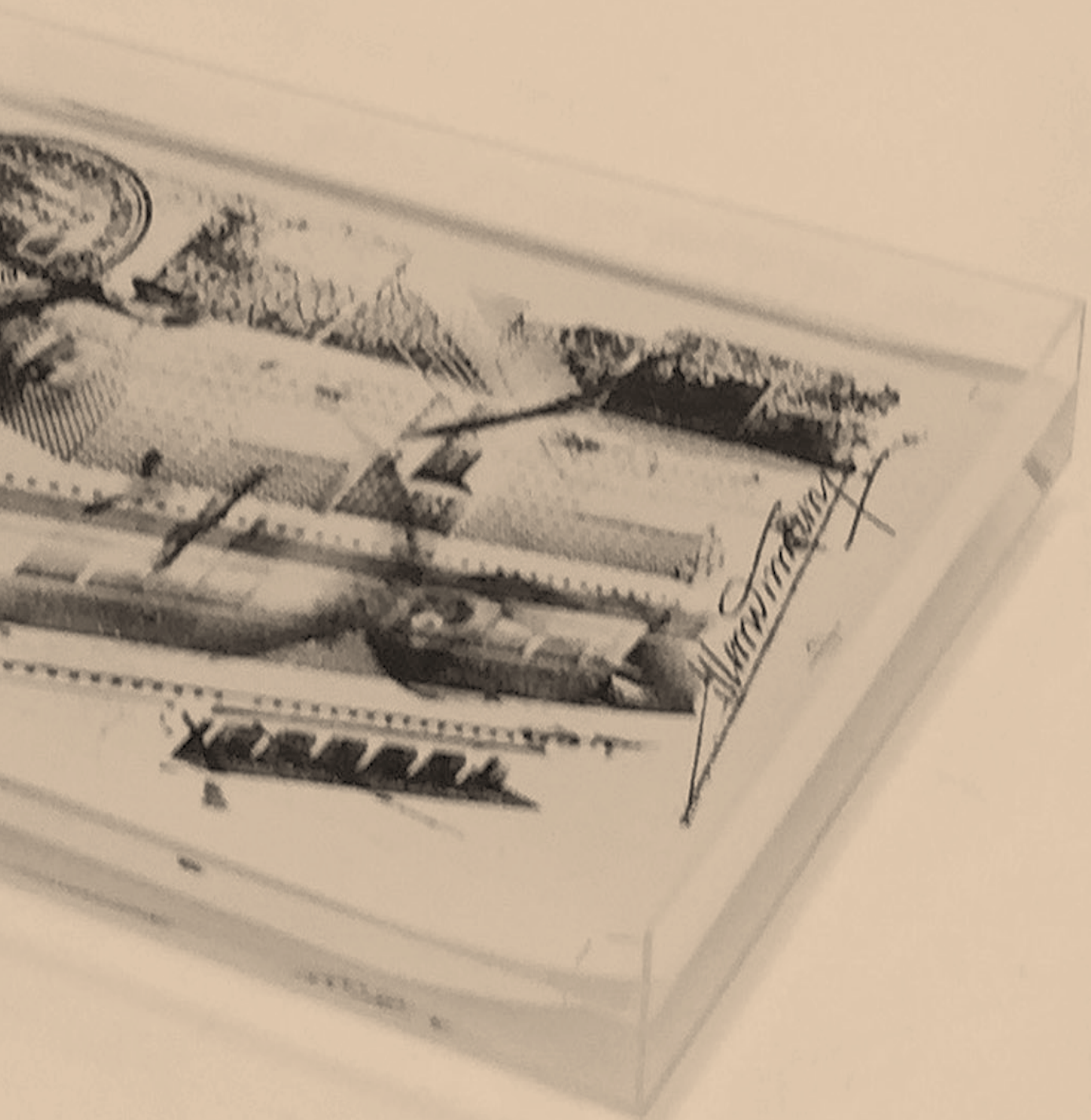
We can therefore recognize by looking back that we have achieved a lot. But by looking ahead, we can see that we still have many ideas and projects that need implementing. For us it is important to keep in mind the three main pillars that guide our actions which are: identity, service, and being a representative of the people in our community.

Lost identities

by Francesca **Druidi**



Born in Angola, Portuguese by adoption, and citizen of the world. Artist Délio Jasse, one of the finalists of Pomilio Blumm Prize 2016, deals with the theme of identity and memory through a language that, by definition, is strongly bound to the present: photography.



Handwritten signature or text, possibly "W. H. ..."



“I had never before been able to show and speak of a work of art on television in any of the countries I travelled to for work. So it was a real challenge for me to take part in this project!” This is how Délio Jasse, a finalist for the Pomilio Blumm Prize, spoke about his participation in the contest organised by Pomilio Blumm and SkyArteHD. Born in Angola in 1980, Jasse moved to Europe at the age of 18 to avoid being drafted into military service and war and found his vocation for art and intercultural commitment in Lisbon. Today, his time is spent between Portugal and Italy working on a fascinating experimental project with photography, his preferred art form.

Traces of life

The concept of “lost identity” is at the core of his work, which involves a great deal of research in long forgotten archives. The artwork Délio Jasse creates revolves around documents that once belonged to other people. He uses them in photographic installations that confer a new artistic identity upon them without losing track of the lives and faces that would otherwise have been relegated to oblivion. His project, entitled “Memorial” (2015), was shown during the Pomilio Blumm Prize and is a fine example of anthropological art in which the artist's ties to his native land and its post colonial history is clearly evident. “The work

VISUAL MEMORIES

In the opening page, Délio Jasse, “Memorial”, 2015.
On the top, old family photographs (photo: iStock)

The memory is fragmentary, not linear, it's imaginary because, compared to its original source, it exudes additional emotions, values and meaning.

I spent seven years waiting for my identity to be legalised. I know who I am, where I was born, but without a whole slew of data, the system could not recognise my existence.



Dèlio Jasse

Afro-Portuguese
artist, finalist of the
Pomilio Blumm Prize
Art Contest Show
2016

involved rummaging through dusty bins at the Lisbon flea market in search of old pictures of total strangers, of normal people”, the artist explained. “After having gathered all the information I could, I would create compositions that would result in a single image”. Photography and history are closely intertwined in Jasse's work. “A picture”, he went on, “doesn't just capture a moment, it records the unique circumstances surrounding that moment. The memory is fragmentary, not linear, it's imaginary because, compared to its original source, it exudes additional emotions, values and meaning”.

Authorisation to exist

His propensity for such themes are memory and history, which then link up with the theme of identity, comes from his own experiences, especially the complicated bureaucratic red tape he had to wade through in order to obtain Portuguese citizenship. “I spent seven years in Portugal without any documents, waiting for my identity to be legalised”, he recounted. “I know who I am, where I was born, but without a whole slew of data, the system could not recognise my existence, even though I had the right. You have to

seek out an infinite number of stamps, numbers and information that may seem trivial to you, but are fundamental to the authorities”. It was this experience that led Jasse to reconstruct, through his art, a sort of “authorisation to exist” for unknown people, people deprived of any identity. After his first shows in Lisbon, Jasse won the ANTECIPARTE award in 2009 and in 2015 he was asked to display his work in the Angola pavilion during that year's Venice Biennale. “Being a visual artist, I am always out and about seeking information, every day, along every street. Every waking moment is somehow spent gathering images”. Dèlio Jasse's urge to innovate is incessant. From when he was just a young artist, he already had a keen interest in such alternative printing techniques as cyanotype, platinum/palladium and the Van Dyke Brown process, as well as silk screening, black and white, and experimenting with a wide variety of supports. The archival photographs Jasse created were a main feature at the “The Place to Be” show at the Angola pavilion at Milan's Expo 2015, a show in which the artist once again bared his deep connection to his native land, tying the knots of history and memory together through his layered, shaped and coloured compositions.

Frontier art

by Francesca **Druidi**

Real walls and symbolic walls. Through a video performance, Fatma Bucak explored with grace and sensitivity the complex concept of border using an artistic metaphor to raise awareness on a real, painful issue: the situation of Saharawi's refugees.





Fatma Bucak was born in Iskenderun, between Syria and Turkey, and so she knows something about frontiers. Confines and borders are a part of her personal history and then naturally became a theme in her artistic experimentation. Her performance, photography, sound and video art take a deep look at very real and pressing topics such as political identity and landscapes as a place of historical renegotiation. Yesterday's and today's geopolitical crises have created situations, conflicts and wounds that no institution, no matter under what banner, has been able to deal with and that much of the media mostly ignore. Through her art, Bucak explores and recounts places which are often forgotten, or which should be seen in a different light. "The topic of borders belongs to our generation, as it does to that of our forefathers. My task is to define borders in a different way, through symbolic representations and metaphoric descriptions", the artist explained. "My experience with borders has been different from other communities I have come across over the years", Every time she finds herself some place where the landscape presents itself with a barrier – a wall, a mark or a door – Bucak's aim is to conceptually and ideologically describe what effect that presence has on the people who live with it daily. When she submitted her installation for the Pomilio Blumm Prize, the Turkish artist presented an elaboration of the video images of two performances that took place in the Western Sahara, one of which features herself at the centre of the scene, while the other stars two Sahrawi activists at the 2,700 km long wall that marks the confine between Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Forty years after the republic's self-proclamation of independence from neighbouring Morocco, the political and humanitarian situations have remained unresolved, and the Sahrawian

The topic of borders belongs to our generation, as it does to that of our forefathers. My task is to define borders through symbolic and metaphoric representations.

people remain confined to refugee camps in the Algerian desert, one of the driest and most inhospitable corners of the earth. Add to that the wall Morocco built to maintain sovereignty over the areas they reclaimed through occupation, which was not just military but included a dense concentration of devastating land mines which have, over the years, claimed many lives and limbs. Taking on the role of spokeswoman for the Sahrawi question, to which the media has effectively turned a blind eye, Fatma Bucak has reinforced the social value of art, the main theme of this competition and about which she has very clear ideas. "Artists belong to a society, and they have a responsibility to it. Obviously, the role of the artists cannot, nor should, become that of the journalist. There is a different sort of sensitivity than that which belongs solely to the world of information, to the media". Art, especially when it is socially, culturally and/or politically relevant, takes on a role that makes it a source of information, and more. "You could say that the artist has studied and trained for his task, but this does not mean he is intellectually superior, he just presents a different point of view and through this presents the concept in a different way, a way the artist handles and knows how to handle".



Fatma Bucak

Turkish artist, finalist of the Pomilio Blumm Prize Art Contest Show 2016

IMAGINARY BOUNDARIES

In the previous pages, "An Empire of the Imagination", Fatma Bucak. On the right, Saharawi women (Photo: United Nations CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



The dawn of language

by Yulia Okun

A silhouette of a person holding a tablet in a cave, with ancient rock art visible on the wall.

32 recurring geometric signs are found in caves all over Europe, spanning 30 thousand years. Archaeologist Genevieve Von Petzinger tells us about her fascinating research on mankind's very first attempts of graphic expression.





Between 40 and 10 thousand years ago, in remote areas from Europe and beyond, inhabitants first began drawing rudimentary figures inside their caves and caverns, one example being the so-called “cave painting”. Hunting scenes, galloping deer, buffalos, such as the famous French cave in Lascaux, have been studied since the mid-XIXth century, but only recently has there been a closer attention to geometric signs – lines, points, circles—which are almost always featured in these scenes of prehistoric life. Genevieve Von Petzinger, anthropologist at Victoria University, Canada, devoted her research to these signs, visiting hundreds of rock art sites in Spain, France, and Italy (52 sites in the first phase, then reaching more than 400), identifying and cataloguing various geometric shapes based on differences and similarities. Her research resulted in a set of 32 recurring and sometimes highly structured signs; if they don't represent any language in the strict sense, without any doubt they assume some kind of shared meanings. It's too early to speculate about their nature and meaning, the same goes for

the “social” function of the tribal communities' signs. And probably, warns Von Petzinger, there won't be a unique answer not even of their meaning nor their motivations: it is essential to question ourselves and create new research directions towards what might have represented the dawn of a pan-European language.

Your research shows that a limited number of graphic symbols were used in certain regions in Europe, even if far from each other and covering a time-frame of thousands of years. Can we, therefore, hypothesize that a European proto-language has ever existed?

I am not sure if we can speak about proto-language, maybe the right term would be “pre-protolanguage”. First, let me say that I am an archaeologist, not a linguist, even though I spent a lot of time trying to understand better the origins of reading and what came before writing. What I do know for sure is that proto-writing was probably more organised compared to the graphic shapes of the Ice Age, i.e. the period covered by my research.

DOTS AND LINES

In the opening page, the cave of Cudon, Spain. On the top, points'configurations in the cave of El Castillo, Spain (Photo: Dillon Von Petzinger)

When attributing a sacred or secret nature to rock art, we are giving an interpretation which could be influenced by our own perception of the caves as dark, unsafe and secret places.



**Genevieve von
Petzinger**


Anthropologist of the
University of Victoria,
Canada (photo:
Robert Leslie)

Of course, proto-writings were not “proper” languages, defined as “structural systems of signs” able to represent just about anything we can think of. There were not enough symbols yet to cover all the words of a language. Signs only referred to extremely limited semantic domains, such as economic transactions or trade. For example, writing on bones in China showed oracles predictions and the meaning of the written symbols was limited to this specific semantic area. Besides, there were no connectors: there was no need to build complete sentences nor a proper grammar. And yet, in spite of these constraints, these forms and shapes were more advanced compared to the signs that were conserved in the caves that I have visited. This means that we are facing mankind's very first experiments in communicating graphically, which is terribly exciting, considering that it was 30 to 40 thousand years ago. Even though the number of signs is very limited, it cannot be compared to later systems with hundreds or even thousands of symbols. Yet, this original system tells us some important points. For example,

even with such a limited number of signs, there is a need of a shared meaning for the scheme to work. This may explain why we are seeing the same signs replicated across different regions and times.

At this point of your project, do you have any assumptions about the symbols meaning? If so, can we speak about recurring concepts that our ancestors felt the need to share, that might constitute a sort of “universal themes”?

The “meaning” issue is extremely complex and we need to be cautious. There is no doubt that in order to be able to function, the system, however limited, was to be based on a shared meaning. Certainly, therefore, we have to assume that some of these signs had the same meaning in certain periods and in certain regions. However, we must not forget that—as we are dealing with such a long and distant period of time, a whole part of prehistory—things might have changed over such a long timeframe. Signs might also keep their tangible form, but it does not mean that their meaning



I would not be surprised if some of the signs turned out to be “identity markers”, either individual or tribal: some kind of “I was there”. Or some hunting code, or a counting method.

will be preserved. This is true for all languages. In English for example, in the last 50 years, certain words have dramatically changed their meaning, whereas their tangible form was unchanged. There was a time when the word “sick” meant “physically unwell”, but young people today use it to say that something is really cool. Similarly, two identical circles found in two different places and dating back from two chronologically very distant periods do not necessarily have the same meaning. We then think that the last people who knew the signs' meaning have died 10 thousand years ago. There are no more interpreters to decode them. However, I am not ruling out the possibility that among these recurring signs we could identify some thematic meanings. A category that occurs to me gathers the signs, which we have defined as “penniform”, because they look like spears or arrows. Some of them are huge, as big as animals, and the context seems to be pointing towards this interpretation: they are likely to represent an animal being hunted. In this case, our fear of over-interpreting possibly went too far and held us back too much. However, questioning our interpretation is always necessary: sometimes an arrow just represents an arrow, and it is ok to call it just that way. But in certain situations, we can make further hypotheses based on the context. For instance, we have tools to tell us which weapons were used by those who wrote these signs, so that some sign combinations might very well indicate some kind of weapons' list. In the same way, in these representations the landscape is missing: the sky, the mountains and other things which must have also been very significant for these

people. Some of these signs look like small mountains, others, found in Spain for example, remind us of stylized rivers; these signs could match some features of the regions where they were found. In other cases, where we are confronted with grapes of dots and lines organized in parallel rows, we could cautiously suppose that they represent a counting system. I am not thinking of counting for trade or economic transactions, like in the proto-writing, as it essentially involved small groups of 15-20 persons maximum, but systems to track natural and seasonal cycles, which were important points for the life of these groups. Maybe they were keeping track of the hunting trips and how they went: many interpretations can be imagined, but it is very difficult. In the end, we can surely confirm that a universal urge to communicate graphically has existed. The subject of such a communication is still open to hypotheses, but we can reasonably imagine that it varied according to time and its geographical location. In conclusion, I do not think that we can talk about some universal meaning of these signs.

What about your experience in the caves, half a kilometre underground; did you ever ask yourself what were our ancestors doing there? Have you reached any working hypothesis regarding this question?

I think it's a natural question to ask. What was it like to go down in one of these caves back then? It must not have been easy, as they had to bring torches with them and sometimes jump over deep crevasses. Plus, they had none of our

ANCIENT SIGNS

The silhouette of a hand dating back to 27.000 years ago, cave of El Castillo, Spain (Photo: Dillon Von Petzinger)



From urban graffiti to contemporary arts, today we use graphic signs for the most diverse reasons, and our ancestors probably did the same.

PRIMORDIAL ART

On the left, Paul Klee, "Conquest of the mountain", 1939 (photo: Wikimedia, public domain)

modern technology, such as LED lights, and sometimes I wonder whether our perception of the signs is influenced by the way we react to the caves' experience. For us the place is hostile and unusual - no one spends time in a cave without a valid reason today - whereas back then they were familiar surroundings. People used to live near the caves, they found shelter in them: caves were hence a bit like our backyards – this is evidenced by the presence of children's footprints found inside the caves. These facts must have influenced the meaning and the function of these signs. There are also cases of signs found in outdoor sites, such as in camps dating back to 20-25 thousand years in Portugal, where rock art fragments, similar to those in the caves per shape and imagination, are visible all over the whole site. All this indicates that the drawings' function had neither a sacred nor a secret character: everyone could see them; they just had to look around. I am not saying there was nothing spiritual; however, it is difficult to imagine a possible mystic function if the drawings were in an open-air area and part

of their daily life. The point is when attributing a sacred or secret nature to rock art, we are giving an interpretation which could be influenced by our own perception of the caves as dark, unsafe and secret places.

Why do you think our ancestors have drawn these signs? Do you think they could be communicating with some divine forces or with those who were to come after them?

In regards to the motives behind the signs, caution is also to be observed like for the meaning. We are talking about an extremely long historical period, and about a region covering the entire European continent: once again, it is difficult to think of just one reason for these signs. Also, I do not think it will ever be possible to elaborate a comprehensive theory: all such attempts in anthropology have ended up being discarded. I do believe, in any case, that common sense is a key in understanding such an aspect, true also for today: we can never find a sole reason for the creation of paintings or graphic signs. From urban graffiti to contemporary arts, today we use graphic signs for the most diverse reasons, and our ancestors probably did the same. I am just guessing, I would not be surprised if some of the signs turned out to be "identity markers", either individual or tribal: some kind of "I was there". Similarly, they could have represented some hunting code, or, as I said earlier, a counting method, or abstract representations of the landscape, or weapons. Moreover this would be consistent with other cases of rock art found in other parts of the world, which also represent stylized scenes of

life or constellations. And on top of that, there may be some spiritual or shamanic art. Anyway, it is reasonable to think—or at least this is my assumption—that rock art fulfilled a wide range of functions among those first forms of societies.

Generally, a geometric sign can indicate either an abstract concept, like a relationship or a quantity, or a specific element of reference from the real world, represented in a very stylized way: what was the main function of these signs in your opinion?

This is a very interesting question, and it is strictly connected to the previous one. The concept of “function” is highly stimulating when opposed to the concept of “meaning”. In fact, the concept of “sign” in linguistics refers to different phenomena. If I see the drawing of a horse, it will most probably indicate a “real” horse. There could be other levels of meaning connected in various ways, however, but at the basis we have an actual referent that has been translated into an iconic sign. Then we have “symbols”, which are more complex signs, based on an arbitrary relation with the meaning, which is not necessarily connected to a referent in the real world. From an archaeological point of view, this problem has not been studied enough in depth. We have assigned the generic name of “signs” to the geometrical graphemes we have identified, without asking ourselves which kind of signs they were: are they icons or symbols? Of course, there is a low probability that a wide range of symbolic signs collection dating 20-30 thousand years ago has ever existed. It is only with the proto-languages, in fact, that we first

We can surely confirm that a universal urge to communicate graphically has existed. The subject of such a communication is still open to hypotheses.

can observe symbols in the strict sense. It is thus more likely that the geometric signs in caves are icons, highly stylized representations of daily life objects. Anyhow, this question needs to be raised. The current categorisation system has been determined many years ago, and recognizes three categories: animals, humans and geometric signs. We have applied it conscientiously, without wondering whether that was really the best distinction. In this respect, we should be a little braver. In the XIXth century, researchers frequently imposed their own hypothesis to a phenomenon as a possible explanation or interpretation. Such an approach, however, cannot be tolerated by our contemporary scientific methods, as we are constantly asking ourselves what is the best way to examine such a phenomenon. But today, we have perhaps moved a little bit too much towards the uncertainty side. We should question ourselves whether the categories we are using make sense and, if necessary, propose new ones. What can really unify all of these signs, apart from the fact of being geometrical? It is precisely this direction that my current research is now pursuing.

Citizen-consumer

The power of data

by Irma Domini

Policymaking must become more and more based on reliable, up-to-date, and comparable data. Such is the aim of Eurostat's far-sighted project, Power from Statistics, which is destined to shape official Statistics in the future. The project begins with a delicate topic: migrations.



Irma Domini

EU project and event manager in Pomilio Blumm

Migrations are highly complex, multi-faceted phenomena, subject to different interpretations. Our recent project conducted for Eurostat (European Union Statistical Office) allowed us to gain personal and direct knowledge on this topic. In this case, our experience was linked to Eurostat's relation with the principal European institutions, and with its activity in identifying and monitoring the starting point of any fundamental European policy: data.

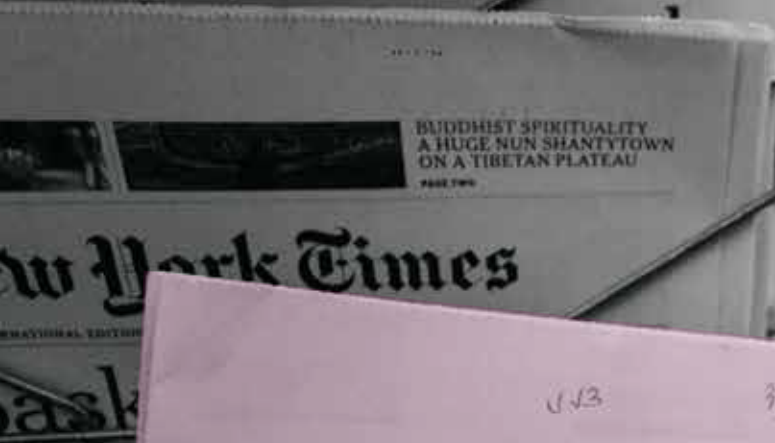
In light of the growing importance of quantitative analysis for policymaking, Eurostat started the project "Power from Statistics: Data Information and Knowledge." Briefly, the project is a bridge for official statistics toward the future (i.e., statistics made by national institutions of Statistics

and by the relative public systems). It aims to offer knowledge on the most important topics, and it tries to envision ways of how official Statistics can be of superior support to such themes through up-to-date methodology and a far-sighted process of data-gathering.

This is the long-term aim which has been pursued through a series of round-table discussions dedicated to five key areas. It is not by chance that the first area of discussion is migration one of the most pressing issues today in Europe.

On October 24, 2016, international experts and institutional representatives met in Bratislava, Slovakia for the first intense round-table discussion dedicated to exploring the principal aspects of migra-

tion. Experts underlined the growing weight of the phenomenon and the need to promptly gain accurate and harmonized data to better comprehend migration and its many facets. All experts agreed that it is crucial to come to a better understanding and analysis of all intrinsic perspectives of the phenomenon: motivations, channels, behaviours, skills, and the level of integration of migrants, especially from non-European countries. The results of this round-table discussion and of the next ones, which have been held in other European cities, resulted in an Outlook Report, which has been discussed in Brussels on October 18-19, 2017. All of this will then be integrated into a series of guidelines that will be applied at a European level.





Data journalism and post-truth

by Federica **Vagnozzi**

A new way of doing journalism, combining scientific method with the quest for truth. Nicolas Kayser-Bril, co-founder of Journalism++ tells us about the pros and the cons of data journalism through *The Migrant Files* as a pilot experience.

“*The Migrant Files*’ most important result was to show that European governments are directly responsible for the death of thousands of people. By building a barbed wire wall at the border with Turkey, for instance, the Greek government forced thousands of people to reach Europe by sea, which is much more dangerous, thus becoming responsible for the death of hundreds of men, women, and children”. Such is the comment of Nicolas Kayser-Bril on the effect of *The Migrant Files*, the data journalism project led by his network Journalism++, which uncovered data, numbers, and circumstances regarding the death of 30 thousand migrants between 2010 and 2015 on the European territory. Whilst it was awarded many prizes, *The Migrant Files* was also the target of some accusations, such as “dehumanising” the phenomenon by reducing it to data and numbers: “Bringing individual events, even the tragic ones, into a wider context does not dehumanise them at all” comments Bril. “On the contrary, by showing trends, we explicit the causal link between certain decisions and their consequences. By attributing a cause to individual tragedies, we are able to explain them and “humanise” them. Whereas earlier shipwrecks were depicted by media as unavoidable (“the poor migrants are victims of a cruel twist of fate”), they can now be linked to the wider picture and to the actions of European governments”. This is an example of how a quantitative “treatment” of a subject can sometimes reveal aspects that a qualitative reading fails to show, especially with regards to extremely important and delicate topics such as the migration flow, with its human, financial and social cost.

Working with structured data has no impact on journalism's fundamental rules: the extracted information must be analysed and contextualised to make sense.

Data-driven journalism has changed the way stories are produced and communicated. However, data must be searched, analysed and interpreted. How do you guarantee some degree of objectivity in covering a topic?

Data journalism simply means journalism employing structured data. And structured data are nothing but information elaborated according to a precise scheme, defined beforehand. In simple words, we can imagine non-structured information as a “free text”, while structured information resembles more a table with lines and columns. Working with structured data has no impact on journalism's fundamental rules: the extracted information must be analysed and contextualised to make sense. As a journalist who simply reports a politician's statements without verifying them is not a journalist but a typewriter, similarly, a data journalist who sees data without verifying or analysing them does nothing else than a simple showcase.

Can developments (and success!) in data-driven storytelling promote a culture of “news interpretation” and



**Nicolas
Kayser-Bril**

Journalist and
developer, co-founder
and CEO of
Journalism ++



FLOWS AND BARRIERS

In the opening page: Financial Times' front page (photo: iStock). On the top, the anti-migrant barrier built on the border between Hungary and Serbia (photo: Bor Benedek CC BY 2.0)

“fact-checking” among users so as to contribute in the fight against fake news?

It is first of all necessary to define which is the fake news. As I have already written (in the essay *Data-driven journalism in the post-truth public-sphere*) there is no link, at least in Europe, between journalism and the truth. This can sound shocking, but can you recall the last time a journalist was fired for modifying an interview or reportage? No idea? That's normal, as it never happens. To make an example: in 1991 Patrick Poivre D'Arvor, a notorious French presenter, falsified entirely an interview with Fidel Castro. His punishment? None. Let us imagine for a moment a mechanic intentionally piercing a tube, or a doctor accidentally cutting off an artery and getting away with it without any consequences. With data, it is exactly the same. You can use them for propaganda (the USSR was a master in propaganda info-posters), or you can use them in the quest for truth. These two ways of dealing with data are to be found both in newsrooms and outside of them. What really makes data journalism stand apart is its scientific approach. The scientific approach consists in posing a falsifiable hypothesis,

which is then tested to validate or invalidate it. This is the best way to create a factual truth, and thus to fight against “fake news”, whichever they may be. Many data journalists follow the scientific approach and act just like (and sometimes better than) researchers.

Storytelling about migration is in trend both among mainstream media and among those who try to propose “counter narratives” about this topic. The Migrant Files' success is one example. So, how do you translate such a complex subject into data, all the while maintaining the informative and interpretative function of journalism?

With regards to “the story”, the strength of *The Migrant Files'* first part (The Body Count) was its simplicity. All we did was to count the people who died, either when trying to reach Europe or when being forced to leave it. We also tried, for each person, to find where they died and the precise date, as well as the circumstances in which death occurred. We based our project on previous works from other NGOs and on our own independent research. The points of view we could develop starting from these data were very



ВЕЛИКИЙ ПЛАН РАЗВИТИЯ СЕЛЬСКОГО ХОЗЯЙСТВА СССР. 1961-1980 гг.

Создание, наряду с могучей промышленностью, процветающего, всесторонне развитого и высокопродуктивного сельского хозяйства—обязательное условие построения коммунизма. Партия организует мощный подъем производительных сил сельского хозяйства, который позволит решить две основные, тесно связанные между собой задачи: а) достигнуть изобилия высококачественных продуктов питания для населения и сырья для промышленности; б) обеспечить постепенный переход советской деревни к коммунистическим общественным отношениям и ликвидировать в основном различия между городом и деревней.

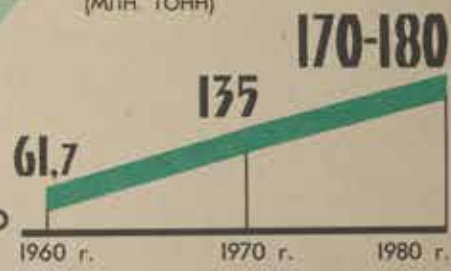
Из Программы Коммунистической партии Советского Союза



ОБЩИЙ ОБЪЕМ ПРОДУКЦИИ СЕЛЬСКОГО ХОЗЯЙСТВА (1960 г.=1)



ПРОДУКТЫ ЖИВОТНОВОДСТВА (млн. тонн)



You can use data for propaganda, or you can use them in the quest for truth. These two ways of dealing with data are to be found both in newsrooms and outside of them.

PROTO

INFOGRAPHICS

Propaganda poster from USSR, 1962 (photo: Russian Posters Collection, 1919-1989 and undated, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University)

easy to comprehend, as the topic was lost human lives. We were also able to explore the geographical and chronological trends of these fatalities to show the real impact of EU member states' politics. On the contrary, the second phase of the project (The Money Trails) focused on the financial aspects of the “Fortress Europe”; how much was spent by people who wanted to reach Europe, and how much the European citizens were paying to prevent it through taxation. Although this second part of the project was more original and worthy of note than the first one, it did not have a great impact. Success was marginal among readers, and we could not influence at all the way public authorities try to stem the phenomenon, whereas the first phase started a change in the attitude of international organisations, which after its publication began counting the number of deaths among people who wanted to go to Europe. The reason behind this is, in my opinion, is that the second phase aimed at a greater complexity. There were references to financial flows, public tenders, and favouritism... nothing concrete.

The experience of Journalism++ shows that data journalism is always a trans-national, distributed, multi-linguistic and multi-disciplinary phenomenon. What are the advantages and the risks of working on such a large scale and intercultural network?

Advantages are clear: with the help of an international team it is possible to analyse or gather information simultaneously; we can count on the presence of qualified people to study data that are specific to each country. In order to publish, each journalist contacts a media in his own country, or, if they work for a newspaper, they organize themselves with their editor-in-chief. All this allows to conduct a report such as *The Migrant Files* with a very low budget (7000 euros for the first phase, with some 10 journalists, and 15000 for the second one, with about 30 journalists and IT developers). We are thus able to manage substantial volumes of data, like the Panama Papers, whose analysis, according to promoters, would have taken a “standard” report group some 26 years. Risks are less evident to perceive, but they do exist. After the '90s a network ideology appeared. Those who have success are those able to articulate a network of contacts and to deploy

Bringing individual events, even the tragic ones, into a wider context does not dehumanise them at all. On the contrary, it shows the causal link between certain decisions and their consequences.

a flexible, always readapting organisation. Journalism is no exception, and many projects are entrusted to a group not because it is the best option, but because it is the trend or because, in most cases, the project sponsors demand it. When a problem occurs—generally if the starting hypotheses are not verified—reorganising an international project is much more complicated than a small, centralised group. Besides, collaboration implies high management costs: it sometimes happens that these are higher than the benefits brought by an international experience and an increased working capacity.

What is data journalism's situation in Europe? Is there a shared working method, or do different principles, methods, and techniques prevail?

When talking about data journalism, we are actually dealing with three things, only partially overlapping. On one hand, there is the technique: acquire data, work on them on spreadsheets and then visualize them through online tools. Today, this technique is everywhere; almost all journalism schools offer their students this type of course. However, as already mentioned, this does not guarantee at all that data will be used to produce the

truth. On the contrary, without solid skills in data analysis, chances of getting it wrong are higher. On the other hand, we have to consider the organisation. The term “data journalism” is used for a group of journalists and IT-developers working together. This leads to re-think the workflow in the newsroom and to staff additions (developer, project leader). Which, in turn, not only makes it possible to work on structured data, but also to explore new territories of necessary cooperation between IT and narration: virtual reality, automated writing for articles, employing sensors, and so on. This re-organisation of the editorial staff has started since 2012 in Berlin by Zeit Online, in Switzerland by Srf, in Warsaw by Gazeta Wyborcza and by some other magazines that have created “data teams” and “innovation labs”. Only in Italy and France, among countries with more than 10 million inhabitants, almost no media has set down this new type of teams. The third pillar of data journalism is the method, which basically aims at harmonising the scientific method with the “rhythms” of journalism. Unfortunately, given the state of journalism economy, this way of doing journalism is still a minority, and above all it is scarcely ever taught.

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Challenges of today, methodologies of tomorrow

by Lidia Tripiccione

Models, surveys, and (Big) Data. Statistics could offer powerful tools to meaningfully interpret the reality of migrations. However, the road is not as straightforward as it might seem at first glance, since migration is challenging the traditional methods of statistics.

Traditional data sources on their own cannot really provide a good measurement of migration flows as data are usually gathered through a long period of time.

The conference “Power from Statistics: Delivering the Evidence for Tomorrow,” which was held in Brussels on October 18 and 19, 2017, was dedicated to critically discussing the future of official statistics in the face of society's current challenges. A topic of discussion was, of course, migration. As thousands of migrants are being forced every day to undertake perilous journeys across the Mediterranean to reach our shores, European countries need to act promptly and to, hopefully, reach a shared agreement on sensible policies. Help can be received from official statistics and institutions such as Eurostat, whose work in collecting and analyzing data could serve as a solid ground both for politicians and policymaking, and for those working in journalism and communication. However, if the contribution of statistics is to be decisive, new ways to gather and process data must be explored, just as new ways to reach out to migrants must be devised on a micro-level. On the macro-level we need a constant flow of data in order to keep track of the phenomenon while it is happening and act accordingly. What are then the traditional

data sources available to us today? Are they a valid resource to tackle today's migration flows? As Jakub Bijak, Associate Professor of Demography at the University of Southampton informs us: “There are censuses, every 5 or 10 years; they are very rare and give minimum information. We then also have administrative data sources, which are typically not collected for statistical purposes, but for administrative ones. These sources may not be complete, and may not cover all the populations that we would like for them to cover.” Surveys are also available which are comprised of carefully designed questions to gather precise information on a certain population. What becomes evident from Bijak's words is that traditional data sources on their own cannot really provide a good measurement of migration flows as data are usually gathered through a long period of time. What other options do we have then?

Real time information

A possibility is to rely on models and integrate them with more traditional design-based statistics—such as surveys.

EUROPEAN CRISIS

In the opening page, two migrants arriving in Italy (photo: Francesco Malavolta). On the right, a mural by artist Banksy, inspired by Brexit, that appeared in the English town of Dover in May 2017 (photo: dunan hull CC BY 2.0)

Lidia Tripiccone

Expert on Semiotics and Russian formalism





If the contribution of statistics is to be decisive, new ways to gather and process data must be explored, just as new ways to reach out to migrants must be devised on a micro-level.

TEMPORARY SHELTER

An immigrant woman washes her clothes in the sea on Kos island (photo: International Federation of Red Cross CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

However, only what goes under the name of non-traditional data sources could provide us with information in real time. In such cases, Rainer Münz, special adviser on Migration and Demography at the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), tells us that: “We would have to go after cell phone data and see where a certain user has made a call from. Data based on people's daily movements can be readily available only if we use this type of data.” Privacy implications are dire in these situations; however, it is worth noting that our own movements are already being tracked on a daily basis when using a smartphone. For instance, an app such as Google Maps can promptly inform us about traffic jams in our proximity, nonetheless, it is only able to do so because it records various data, through GPS technology, about the current position of other cell phone users currently stuck in that congested route. As far as real time information is concerned, another source at our disposal is big data. However, this road has its obstacles as well, as Bijak points out: “The problem is that the methodology is not quite there yet, and we very often don't know what the

data actually means. Not only that, but even if we knew, this could change next week without a warning since, taking the example of social media and private data, companies change their algorithms. Details of the algorithms used are never released for public consumption. This is one big caveat.” Nonetheless, big data and non-traditional data could prove crucial, for instance, in the area of “early warnings”, i.e. in providing frequent statistical snapshots for the EASO (European Asylum Support Office) by giving real-time estimations of overall asylum trends at an EU level. As timely data is of key importance in such areas, it is paramount that new possibilities and new avenues for data-based statistics are explored.

From macro to micro

Moving from the macro-level to the micro-level, we must take into account the sphere of direct communication. Reaching out to migrants to get information directly from them, which could be useful for survey-based research, is not always easy, both in the case of irregular migrants and with

Since it is so difficult to establish how the migrants' situation exactly is, it is our duty to find the best way to reach out to them and establish communication based on trust.

regular migrants as well. Migrants coming from authoritarian regimes might become suspicious if authorities start asking a lot of questions or they might give out false information because they think that by telling the truth their chances of being welcomed in Europe will decrease. Alice Petrén, migration correspondent for Swedish Broadcasting, states that: “[In Lesbos] there are many new arrivals traveling from Turkey each day: new migrants are first required to give fingerprints, then they are photographed, and registered. Furthermore, they are required to go for a medical check-up. Many say they feel fine, they say they are healthy, because most of the new arrivals believe that that is the best way to get in the country. They believe that we are only willing to welcome them if they are healthy.” Petrén also adds that, in spite of such statements, psychological problems are on the rise on the Greek island, as people feel stuck there with no real prospect for the future. Since it is so difficult to establish how the migrants' situation exactly is, it is our duty to find the best way to reach out to them and establish communication based on trust. The conditions for effective communication,

of course, vary widely depending on the local context. In Sweden, for instance, young children are accepted into kindergartens on the condition that mothers attend two hours of daily language lessons there. According to Petrén, such circumstances provide good opportunities to approach these women in a sheltered environment so that their voices may be heard as well. The road that statistics must take in order to be able to produce more and more accurate accounts of migration is neither easy nor straightforward, since utmost attention must be paid both on the macro-level and on the micro-level. The most promising direction right now seems to be integrating new methodologies with traditional ones. Nonetheless, we still need to accept the fact that, no matter how polished our models and sources might be, we will forever be faced with results that bear a certain degree of uncertainty. Statistics cannot simply “record reality” since the data collected always needs to be interpreted at first; however, statistics can surely help us act upon reality, and that's the challenge all new methodologies in this field should undertake.

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