Manifesto della nuova comunicazioneManifesto of a new communicationManifesto della nuova comunicazione

This document is the result of a set of seminars concerning professional and civic matters in the communication sector. The team of 'creators' has developed the document during the Covid-19 lockdown. The current version, considered final (even if 'open'), is dated August 10, 2020.

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Introduction

These lines emerged from a series of discussions between communication professionals which took place in the digital environment during the Covid-19 lockdown. We want to give voice to concerns, fears, meaningful experiences, desire of regeneration and aspirations for the future. We want to contribute to the reduction of social resentment that notably increased in our country in the months before the Covid-19 outbreak, and we want to do so with a view to public utility and with the help of communication professionals. The

following pages are an open and inclusive working draft, which will be subject to further additions on behalf of colleagues who progressively join us, suggesting food for thought and changes.

Our key assumption

A communication professional is not a mere executor. Instead, her function is to build and hold together relationships, to give explanations, to make interpretations, to codify the demand for a 'future' and to find the best manners to be unambiguous, clear and unbiased, balancing the interest of the client with that of all the public entities involved in the narrative.

In the debate that has been developing in the past months we have witnessed some tendencies. They emerged from some practices of which we were aware, but that we have too long consciously neglected:

1. The first one concerns the consolidation of corporative logics, that favor strong and organized economic and social subjects. They are able to push in the political agenda some issues so as to regularly find influential shores;
2. The second one, related to the previous one, concerns the variety of approaches that characterize the decision-making process of public and private entities. In particular, a first approach concerns public structures and national policies, that adopt a model that favors a decision-making through chaotic and random processes, resulting from compromises between different stakes. On the other hand, a second approach concerns large economic groups and structured organizations, that, in the face of the current precariousness, take intervention autonomously and self-organize at their

best. Lastly, a third approach concerns those who act as if nothing happened. It refers to the controversial procedures and practices so far employed;

3. The third one entrusts the knowledge of experts and digital technologies with a nearly salvific power. After years during which experts have been mistreated in every field, now they are back centre-stage, not only for the relevant scientific contribution they can give to decisional processes, but also because they can help in the removal of responsibility from decision-makers;

4. The fourth is to continuously rely on other communicators who can give depth to the content conveyed, generating a vicious circle of self-reference, or to rely on experts in the field;

5. The fifth is the lack of consciousness of the public interest, which should guide, now more than ever, the actions of individuals and organizations. The narrative of the 'us' is hardly convincing due to its insufficient appeal, to the structural inability to design efficient solutions that look to collective aims but, more importantly, due to the tendency to talk about the individual and her personal story — often dramatic — as the cover story helpful in generating traffic and likes;

6. The sixth is little awareness of the debate that is generated outside Italy concerning different current issues, as the scientific research, methodological choices for urban regeneration, reshaping of urban spaces and buildings, environmental sustainability, urban resilience, new models for the rebirth of local economies, etc;

From our peculiar point of view, we perceive little commitment by the politicians of our country and by enterprises for what concerns regeneration, in spite of current cenacles, think tanks and scientific committees.

Public administrations are guaranteeing the continuity of

life, together with the community of care, with subsidies, transportation and essential services, but they still risk being short of breath due to the huge amount of bureaucratic procedures that absorb most of their time. However, some local entities at different latitudes have created notable project that do not have the relevance they should. **We should give all the needed narrative support for excellences, where they exist.**

The value added of this collective knowledge will be the ability to select with accuracy, to give priority and promote only those topics that have a large social and ethical impact, that have beyond any doubt positive effects on the collective body and that *help to bring the needed attention to commitment*.

Having a large amount of communication professionals who could choose some topics which are relevant for the country and who would personally choose to insert them in their own communication fields, transferring them also to clients, companies and institutions, would create a natural domino effect, spreading a targeted and contagious awareness.

A commitment of service of the communication professionals' community, based on word-of-mouth and on networking, without any boundary, far from aesthetics, sophisticated jargon and useless paradigms.

We lack social imagination, decoding, interpretation and accompaniment.

We have mobilized large masses with feelings, frames, and surveyed trends on perception through algorithms. Communication, with its professions, has now the chance to reformulate its role and its preeminent social dimension, **that of guiding us in the understanding and interpretation of reality**.

It would take too long to show the positive results of future

entire generations of communicators, freelance journalists and creators. Our generation must master agendas, vocabularies and strategic plans of clients, otherwise it will be short breathed, compared to future generations.

Furthermore, we need to keep into consideration the importance of building meaningful relationships. We keep objects close to us, so much that even losing a pen irritates us. We have extra kilos because our species has been trained for long periods of starvation. We keep friends and family close to us, because our anthropocentric vision of life puts ourselves at the center of our universe.

Instead, we have to relearn how to give. If we do so, our permission to act — and that of the organizations that we represent — will tend to increase, the more we convey content and awareness to others, in the hope that they will also be able to receive, embrace and give back to others, cultivating, improving and nurturing their precious net of relationships.

THE COMMUNICATOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

We want to commit keeping in mind few clear attitudes.

1. **To stop the yearning.** The post pandemic must be focused on the restart, on available energies and on creativity already present: move from a phase of 'Melancovid' (as defined by Liberation in recent months) to a proactive phase, based on the desire to start over from where you stopped.
2. **Build the antibodies to future amnesia.** In this period we have dealt with ourselves, with our limits and virtues. In the period of maximum possible interpersonal distance we discovered unequivocal gestures of solidarity from people and organizations, an useful remedy for the defeatist pessimism that often grips us.
3. **No to the *attic effect*, yes to the valorization of time.**

As happens at the end of every crisis, the desire to move on is very strong and this may include the rejection of habits — including virtuous ones — adopted in the period of emergency, which we might be tempted to put in the attic.

Social distancing changed our being *social animals*, but they have also made clear that convening 10 people who distance 500km for a meeting of few hours may be useless, redundant and polluting. Time is one of the most precious resources for the human being: in the dimension of time there is personal growth, continuous training, books, enjoyment of one's affections: let's not waste it.

4. **To resort to collective intelligence.** We are a social network but also a professional one, a supply chain of skills: from this assumption we should regenerate our laboriousness to offer interpretation of conflicts, explanation of processes, to generate public engagement, and participatory and deliberative processes able to transform the communicative dynamics of informal and formal groups.

5. **A holistic vision of communication.** It is necessary to think of an approach that is coherent on all the platforms with which people interact, that are both physical and virtual platforms. We need a strategically comprehensive approach, starting from the analysis and understanding of the profound needs of the audience to which we turn, their values, always with the aim of building value for the communities of reference.

6. **No more standard products.** We can no longer go back to shelving, reporting, talk show communication. If the message is meant for people, we must reconsider tone of voice, words, attitudes, images, situation by situation.

7. **The beginning of an era of molecular gaze.** The virus has accustomed us to look at pictures of details, to fragments of the situation: we would like a proximal and not distal or maximalist approach to things with the aim

of conceiving messages in relation to the real needs or abilities of people. Engrave for specific goals and avoid an 'all seasons' attitude.

8. **No longer blind peer-to-peer.** Avoid the sharing of materials to equivalent or equal nodes that have not been verified in the sources, copyrights, and commissions, especially the latter.

9. **A new metabolic energy is needed, with sentient roots** (as for plants). It means starting again from the academies, from the centres of formation and research, from specialization schools, from study centres and universities, where often the real research, the outpost of intelligences is nested. The new generations are much more ready for shared research and experimentation.

10. **The communicator can and must become the bridge between** the scientific/technological world and the citizens, must allow the knowledge often closed within the walls of a university to be diffused and to deal with the business world too. Even in the public and institutional sector there is a clear demand for public ethics (with objectives, behaviour, reporting) to build bridges between institutions and citizens.

11. **Data is the other environment we live in.** Our identity as a person is the result of the accuracy we put into the management of our data. We need to raise our awareness on the intangible worlds we frequent and reduce the muscular strength of our networked performances, in order for them to be less shouted and more selected.

12. **Augmented Intelligence.** True augmented intelligence is the professional human capital that surrounds us. The best cultural projects, the most compelling narratives, the most profitable campaigns, are the result of a constant and assiduous interdisciplinary confrontation, also between different representation agencies and organizations.

13. **Stop to witchcraft in information.** Let's restart from

facts and data. The interpretation — in order to be such — must declare its intent from the beginning, in a clear, organized and fair way. Above all, no investiture of pre-emptive oratory at a time when obvious and clumsy omissions multiply.

14. **It is necessary to reappropriate the role of auditor and observer,** an essential basis for a communication that does not pursue current trends but is able to identify and convey new basins of ideas.

15. **Yes to the humble and solid awareness of the craftsman: forge without improvising.** The crisis we have just experienced is (also) the daughter of arrogance and improvisation; we must instead regain the ability to predict scenarios, because only by making our own the *awareness of uncertainty*, in this fluid world and high entropy, will we be able to bring out the skills and attitudes necessary not to find us unprepared, in the future, once again.

How do I re-start?

In conclusion, some suggestions to launch some stimuli in a proposal always open to new contaminations:

Expand the network of interlocutors (professionals, networks, federations, trade associations) to consolidate reflection, accelerating the processes of qualitative growth of all of us.

Realize moments of confrontation, also in the participative and deliberative modality that is today easily allowed by the web, transforming and valuing the communicative dynamics of the informal and formal groups, with a careful and interested eye also to what happens outside the national borders, in Europe and beyond.

Verify potential commitment opportunities on identified key issues.

[1] Documento maturato nel quadro di una attività seminariale sulle tematiche professionali e civili del settore della comunicazione che il team degli "ideatori" (largamente anche estensori) ha sviluppato nel tempo del lockdown generato dalla pandemia causata da Covid-19. Questa versione considerata definitiva (ancorché "aperta") è del 10 agosto 2020.