

Emotions in political discourse and social narratives: sociological reflections on traditional and new media

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ABSTRACT: Emotions have re-emerged as a central topic of sociological interest, especially today, in a complex social and political historical moment. Even politics and events narration is not exempt from the emotional compartment. New technologies and social media (including social networks) have changed communication, relationship processes, and social interaction, moving from a vertical to a horizontal narrative. We live in a “platform society” (Van Dijck, 2018) as online sites and social networks specialized for discussion were also come up with the organization of decision-making processes and the activation of democratic practices in their different “onlife” manifestations. However, one thing should be emphasized: platforms reproduce the social structures in which individuals live between participation, freedom of expression and the elaboration of public political debate. The article aims to synthetically reconstruct the sociological discourse on emotions in political discourse and social narrative and communication through traditional and new media.

KEYWORDS: emotions, sociology, political and social communication, new and traditional media

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of emotions and political communication is very complex and takes on different connotations in today's social context, characterised by technological devices. In particular, by the use of social networks. Communication becomes direct, disintermediated, and within everyone's reach, even politicians who can interface directly with citizens through their social profiles. The communication mediated by technology and new media becomes emotional, with strong emotional connotations,

especially for particular public interest topics as in the first critical pandemic phase.

“Emotions, positive and negative, have always been a fundamental element of acting politics and, consequently, also of political communication. Just think of the value commonly attributed to ‘passion’ as a motive for commitment and participation. The election campaign then is the context in which the dramatization of the narrative politics touches the highest peaks. A process to which both rhetoric and styles contribute. They increasingly personalized, popularized and populist communication styles of leaders and candidates, as much as the trend toward the patemization of news coverage” (Cepernich & Novelli, 2018, p. 1).

It’s also true that emotionally engaging and impactful speeches have always marked political communication. However, in the past, communication was devoted to the physical square, where the language was technical and difficult for the entire population to understand. Still, today, in our mass society, political figures prefer to use everyday language for popular topics in the wave of voters’ feelings thanks to and through propaganda. This condition emerges as an instrumental use of politics for communication and the emotions underlying the argumentative stimuli. The language used, which often screeches, is full of hate words and distorts citizens’ opinions. A condition is also related to the public sphere mediatization process (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) considering neuroscientific *avant-garde*.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the relationship between politics, communication, traditional and new languages and all emotions in order to navigate the examination of what is currently happening in “onlife” era. This process is indispensable to exercising full and active citizenship rights, where emotions are rational processes that must be managed and aware of. The danger is disorientation that can lead to drift and total instinct that makes even politics empty and devoid of any responsibility, not only individual but collective.

2. EMOTIONS, SOCIOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EMOTIONS: AN INTEGRATED PRELIMINARY READING

“Emotions have long been mistakenly confused with a reactive mechanism of the instinctual type, and therefore analyzed with improper methodologies” (Cominelli, 2015, p. 36). We live in a dichotomous society with respect to emotions: on the one hand, we have difficulty externalizing them (especially the negative ones) while, on the other hand, we make them public in a shift that Tisseron calls from intimacy to estimity (Tisseron, 2011).

Aristotle already defined emotions as “happenings” of the soul and “evacuative” responses to situations: in other words, they are the result of an irrational/rational process that determines, once examined, a certain action. They are, for the philosopher, practical rationality on the experiential ground. According to Pareto, man only apparently and in rare cases, acts according to logic; rather, he follows the emotional (latent) flow, which, if extreme, leads him to be clouded in his perception of reality (Pareto, 1980).

Human and social actions are inextricably rational and emotional. Pathos and logos

dualism arose in classical Greece and have remained almost entirely unchanged until our time, even in the political dimension, thinking of emotions as distorting judgment and objective thinking (Arkes, 1993). Authors such as Damasio have emphasized the early synergistic convergence between mind and body because both represent individual adaptive behaviours (Damasio, 1994). Instead, it is interesting to point out an intermingling of rational and emotional paradigms in the forms of their integration and social wholeness.

Comte already emphasizes how much the emotional system plays a fundamental role over that focused on reason (Comte, 1967). It is *Homo Sentiens* who claim choices, opinions, and behaviours in the objective experience of reality in relationship with the other. Social emotions make possible processes and events that cross the boundaries of the individual to result in the relationship and collective action (Cattarinussi, 2000).

The emotional sphere intervenes in the functioning of practical rationality by allowing one to reason and thus “make the most appropriate choices and adopt the most appropriate behaviours both in terms of personal utility and well-being and in terms of social compatibility” (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 71).

The emotional actor role should be thought of not “in opposition to the rational and normative actor, but is instead another face of it, a constitutive and ineradicable part of it, and should not be understood as a spontaneous subject, free from constraints and constraints” (Turnaturi, 1995, p.14).

Fundamental is the role of “cognitive processes in assigning semantic terms to emotional experience; more political scientists have seen an emotional expression as resulting from distinct affective processes (Marcus, 1991). This shift argues that evaluations arising from emotional processes, independent of prior or concurrent cognitive processes, can influence not only emotional expression but also thoughts, decisions, and political behaviour” (Marcus, 2000, pp. 221-250)¹.

As Donati argues with his relational paradigm, social evolution depends and, above all, on the possibility of circulating emotions in all spheres of social life, from the most intimate to the most impersonal (Donati, 2011). Emotions and feelings are never random happenings but are composed of spatial, temporal, cultural, relational, normative conditions and constraints.

Emotions and context. Indeed, the value of mediating emotions between the self (interests, one’s attitudes and experiences, desires, purposes) and the physical (including virtual) and social environment presupposes an emotional exchange that is never out of scope (Anolli, 2002, p.149). According to Lutz, emotional experience “is not precultural but preeminently cultural” (Lutz, 1988, p. 5 in McCarthy, 1994, p. 269).

In this sense, also Mosco (2004) speaks about the “digital sublime” as the tendency to attribute to technology mystical capabilities or intrinsic goals capable of shaping, inevitably, society and the world (Califano, 2019, p. 11). The digital impact is a “political” issue because of crucial social new emerging concepts such as “citizenship”, “work”, “rights”, and “geography” (Ibidem).

In particular, social media are definable as digital environments, as digital ecosys-

¹ See also, on this theme Zuckerman et al., 1993; Watson & Walker, 1996; Cacioppo et al., 1999.

tems and new collaborative forms make the way we relate and do information (and get informed) online more complex. New technologies have changed the way we express our feelings and emotions. They change the perception and meaning we give to what we feel inside and consequently change the perception of our reality and social relationship (cf. Davies, 2016).

In this perspective, the sociological study of emotions and feelings (applied to the context of social and even political communication) represents one of the wealthiest and most comprehensive theoretical perspectives to observe and understand society and new media (such as social networks), “its dynamics, interactions among individuals, gender differences as well as the characteristics of institutional structures” (Hochschild, 2013, p.14).

3. THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN POLITICS AND SOCIAL INFORMATION: THE “DISINTERMEDIATION” PHENOMENON AND THE EMOTIONAL CONTAGION DURING THE COVID-19

So many reticences have accompanied and accompanied even today the reflection of emotions in politics, even though social networks have operated a horizontalization of political communication.

In this regard, it is essential first to talk about the “disintermediation” (Hawken, 1983) concept²: “in political communication, individuals don’t use traditional informational mediators. No longer institutional (Parliament, parties, etc...) or informal (newspapers, news, opinion groups, “civil society”, associations) mediators. They (dis-)inform themselves, and then they act politically in the media, especially on the internet” (Barberis & Giacomini, 2020, pp. 317-340). New technologies, in particular social networks, allow politics to communicate power from the perspective of media entertainment: it is not the content that is important but the communication styles that must adapt to the technological medium (Ibidem)³.

In this discourse, emotions are central as they are embedded in the online world, changing the order of values and behavioural responses: furthermore, Internet (*and social networks*) allows individuals to respond (immediately or whenever users want) to messages by commenting from anywhere on stories, in chat, under posts leaving comments and sharing that content⁴.

In fact, according to Arkes (1993), emotions in politics must be traced back to the rational democratic dimension: “democratic citizens require education in the proper use of their emotions at least as much as in the proper use of their reason because the former better enables cognition to play its role and because affective reactions seem particularly attuned to the normative enactment of public policy... If we wish to understand how to encourage the development of a democracy citizenry, we would do well do... understand the role that affects, particularly in combination with cogni-

² See also the mediatization of politics.

³ See also the political pop concept by Mazzoleni & Bracciale (2019).

⁴ Interestingly, in Italy is the case of the 5-Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle), which was born from the bottom right using digital media. There is, in fact, talk of the party-platforms (Gerbaudo, 2018).

tion, play in defining and sustaining codes of tolerant behaviour (Emphasis added)” (Arkes, 1993, p.290). A discourse that is becoming increasingly pregnant today in our globalized information society.

Fredda also says: “emotions play a key role in interethnic relations and related political and legislative action” (Fredda, 2021, p.271); “politics aims to make fear the link that can keep the community cohesive, thereby replacing what may be other shared values, such as the ideas of democracy and freedom. But politics that stirs fears and anxieties - directing them strategically toward the other, the foreigner, the different— at the same time casts a veil over some crucial and historical elements of social conflicts, such as unemployment, the mafia and corruption” (Ivi., p.237).

It is interesting to see how emotions with negative connotations (although a real distinction between negative and positive emotions does not exist)⁵ are those used as a warning, as a tool of power aimed at fear and intimidation⁶, including hate. In contrast, a politician on his social channels may seem at the same time to be a person close to the users’ way of life, mainly when he posts online photos and pictures of himself in more “sweet”, tender, affectionate poses (with children, animals, or in times of volunteer work, etc.)⁷.

Emotions and emotionality are related to the relationship with others and are always a result of a combination of personal, individual, social and cultural factors⁸: as Kramer, Guillory, and Hancock studied, there is the possibility to create an emotional contagion through social networks (2014, pp. 8788-8790). In other words: “emotional states can be transferred to others via emotional contagion, leading people to experience the same emotions without their awareness. Emotional contagion is well established in laboratory experiments, with people transferring positive and negative emotions to others» also online through social networks” (Ibidem). Something that politicians know very well in order to leverage precisely the emotional dimensions of users online⁹.

Emotions expressed and shared on social media and social networks can affect the emotional states of one’s interlocutors like a veritable social virus. Simply by reading status or seeing content that is strongly emotionally connoted even by politicians, individuals can change their moods by unconsciously steering them in the same direction (Ibidem)¹⁰.

Indeed, Civettini and Redlawsk (2009) have shown that there is a close relationship between emotions, memory, politics and voting. For example, anxiety has a special role, compared to enthusiasm or anger, in increasing the likelihood that a single item will be remembered and thus that politician will be voted for in reference to that in-

⁵ On this theme see: Druckman & McDermott, 2008; Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Just, Crigler, & Belt, 2007; Lerner et al., 2003; Nabi, 2003; Small & Lerner, 2008; Valentino et al., 2011.

⁶ The Political Propaganda based on terror and fear.

⁷ See studies on political leaders.

⁸ See Cromby et al. (2010).

⁹ See also: Berger & Milkman, 2012; Ferrara & Yang, 2015.

¹⁰ See also: <https://www.agendadigitale.eu/cultura-digitale/social-cosi-manipolare-le-emozioni-e-diventato-un-business/#post-70819-footnote-5> and Reddy, 1999.

cident.

It is also true that the Internet and social networks are unforgiving in that they keep track of everything that has been posted and shared. If a politician loses face (translating Goffman), he loses his credibility and reputation online, relegating him to the recovery of that political credibility.

At this point, it is consistent with the Covid-19 example and the even online political narrative: emotional feeling is expressed in multiple ways, considering all emotions, primary and secondary.

During the early pandemic phases, there were negative connotation emotions related to the first disorienting condition linked to fear as a common thread in the social narrative. Interestingly, on a sociological level, research was conducted, in Italy, by the Osservatorio Mutamenti sociali in atto-Covid19 (Msa-Covid19)¹¹ through a nationwide survey published on 21 April 2020. Researchers have recorded, in terms of psycho-social effects, the limitation of human interactions, prolonged coexistence, and the social distancing related to coronavirus. Researchers showed that emotions with negative connotations increased such as anger (+0.78), disgust (+0.68), fear (+0.88), anxiety (+0.91) and sadness (0.88) and decreased, at the same time, happiness (-0.12) along with a state of less relaxation (-0.04)¹².

As mentioned, fear, anger and anguish are conveyed by disseminating a huge amount of information from different sources whose basis is difficult to verify: informational contagion translates into emotional contagion and vice versa. The social reaction, in terms of behaviours and acts, becomes disordered. This is the phenomenon of infodemia¹³, exacerbated by the media-technology overload itself, sometimes by technical sometimes by the banality of information content that does not allow the audience average recipients to distinguish immediately between different senders, institutional and non-institutional, and to consider which is the most credible medium.

Transposing Averill, anger in the Covid-19 context seems to oscillate between that of the “explosive” type that can occur when the individual gives vent tension through aggression and violence (which are typical reactions related to anger, on the other hand) and that of the “constructive” type characterized by the tendency to modify one’s own behaviours with consequences on others, from a more purposeful perspective (Averill, 1982, 1983). Hate language, especially in the explosive violence type, that is typical of many politicians, also online¹⁴.

In Italy, the ex Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, spoke of two possible paths: “we could rely on resentment, anger [...] or we could we could make another choice: we could chase away the anger and think about what everyone can do to enable a quick

¹¹ National Research Council’s Institute for Population and Social Policy Research Research (CNR-Irpps). Study conducted in collaboration with the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV) and the non-profit Children’s Movement Foundation.

¹² Research available on: <https://www.irpps.cnr.it/osservatorio-msa-covid19/>

¹³ Circulation of an excessive amount of information, sometimes not carefully screened, that makes it difficult to navigate a particular topic because of the difficulty of locating reliable sources, http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/infodemia_%28Neologismi%29/.

¹⁴ See also: Granberg, 2020.

recovery”¹⁵. Also, in this case, possible emotions and emotional reactions are emphasized. A political narrative that has been totally turned to the new media use but also traditional media use such as TV. Across all media, therefore, political communication, especially in the early pandemic stages (and also in lockdown periods but not exclusively), has seen a succession of politicians’ thoughts and comments on strategies put in place by the government and the possible distortions of those strategies. Often creating additional disorientation and fear in citizens – users.

A new crisis communication, as De Blasio called it (2021), because “communication is also about emotional exchange and emotions themselves become a necessary vehicle for building a relationship between citizens and institutions”.

Di Blasio’s research team investigated, through a discursive historical methodology, 58 texts, including press and TV interviews, press conferences, and speeches put mainstream media between Feb. 23 and Sept. 3, 2020, focusing on (1) citizens, (2) regions and local governments, (3) politics and the parliament, and (4) the international sphere. Among the major findings: for ex Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte political communication has been affected by a mitigation strategy animated, on the one hand, by confidence and tranquillity, and a dramatization of the economic and financial issues, especially of citizens, on the other hand (Ibidem).

Therefore, emotions in this political discourse are acted upon positively or negatively, taking into account changing levels of intensity: the State’s relationship with citizens is also measured through the emotional politicians’ repertoire between institutional (vertical) and non-institutional (horizontal, mediated on social networks) communication. The emotional paradigm is used to understand the politician’s leadership and the State’s resilience and community.

“These social superiors perform a norm building function, which Hochschild terms ‘emotional authority’, by exercising power over potential or actual non-compliers through denying the feeling rules and by enforcing them via othering or stigmatization” (Hochschild, 1979 in Koschut, 2021, p. 15).

So, the information and culture industry machine and politics must take responsibility and go beyond strategic communicative violence because it is misleading and amplifies dissonant news, emotions and behaviour (Collins, 2014).

4. TODAY LIMITS AND DICHOTOMOUS PROBLEMS IN EMOTIONAL AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE POST-MODERN SOCIETY

In the post-modern society, the relationship between experiences, social and political narrative, and emotions has changed, and it takes different connotations: emotions are simultaneously connected to egoism, vanity, nihilism, desire for power (individual dimension) and anxiety for approval, instrumental interest (socially acted but distorted emotions), in a paradoxical and antinomian circuit that accepts both positions.

Emotions live today in the post-truth (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016) society in which discussion concerning a fact or news item, truth, is considered a matter of secondary

¹⁵ See article on: <http://www.governo.it/it/articolo/conferenza-stampa-del-presidente-conte/14518>, 26/04/2020.

importance; circumstances in which objective facts influence public opinion less than appeals to emotions and personal beliefs. According to Sorice (2021), there is important to consider in this framework: a) the post-representative importance of digital communicative ecosystems; b) the development of the “post-political”, related to the processes of depoliticization; c) the affirmation of postdemocracy.

It is the issue, for example, of fake news, especially in politics. Fake news is “false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke”¹⁶. Indeed, fake news has always been a tool of power and propaganda¹⁷: most political actors deliberately create disinformation masquerading as news in order to influence public perception, either on specific issues, individuals, or perceptions of the world¹⁸.

It is often a matter of manipulation and advertisements, even on an emotional basis¹⁹: one of the successful element of fake news is that they are based on emotions, in opposition to critical thinking (Trninc; Kuprešanin Vukelic, & Bokan, 2020, p.5). And, “the factor that makes a difference between fake and credible news is that articles featuring the former show “higher levels of anger and disgust and substantially lower levels of ‘joy’ in their article body than real news stories” (Ibidem)²⁰.

According to Karcer (2017, pp.202–235), if fake news content is based on violence, users can feel compassion and empathy for victims, but this kind of narration can cause also an opportunity for radicalisation for viewers (Ibidem).

Rogers and Niederr repropose the “computational propaganda”²¹ concept as “the assemblage of social media, autonomous agents and algorithms tasked with the manipulation of opinion” (Neudert, 2017, p. 3 in Rogers & Niederer, 2020, p. 24).

Many other studies have been concerned with the relationship between emotions and fake news²² because exists a close relationship between emotions and the propensity to believe fake news and share it online (compared, for example, to scepticism; Forgas, 2008, pp. 1362-1367).

According to Martel, Pennycook and Rand (2020, p. 47), “the reliance on emotion *may* promote belief in fake news”; or “in other words, anger may promote biased, intuitive, motivated reasoning, whereas anxiety may encourage individuals to consider opposing viewpoints (MacKuen et al., 2010) and perhaps even improve the overall quality of information seeking (Valentino et al., 2008)” (Martel et al., 2020, p.47)²³.

¹⁶ In <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/fake-news>

¹⁷ See also: Molina et al., 2021.

¹⁸ In <https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-809#acrefore-9780190228613-e-809-bibItem-0083>

¹⁹ See Cambridge Analytica Scandal, in 2018 when it was revealed that Cambridge Analytica had collected personal data of 87 million Facebook accounts without their consent and used it for political propaganda purposes.

²⁰ See: Paschen, 2019.

²¹ Computational propaganda is an emergent form of political manipulation that occurs over the Internet. In <https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190931407.001.0001/oso-9780190931407>

²² See: Bakir & McStay, 2017; Choi & Lee, 2021; Horner et al, 2021; Corbu et al, 2021.

²³ See also: Nanath et al., 2022.

Not only fake news in politics but also hate speech: hate, in this sense, becomes a shock emotion (Lacroix, 2002) expressed through “radicalized” communication (Riva, 2017) that, primarily through technological devices, provides for an emotional exploit of violence, aggression and insults, in the disintermediation of speech, in the absence of involvement affective, or in a distorted affectivity proper (but not exclusive) to the environment virtual environment.

“Hate speech covers many forms of expressions which advocate, incite, promote or justify hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or group of persons for a variety of reasons”²⁴ and “any expression that is abusive, insulting, intimidating, harassing, and/or incites to violence, hatred, or discrimination. It is directed against people based on race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, physical condition, disability, sexual orientation, political conviction, and so forth” (Erjavec & Kovacic, 2012).

Haters express themselves on the web through hate, offence, and verbal violence, often without real thought, either on the type of expressions used or the content related to it. It is symbolic that we speak of hate language: the latter is among the emotions that aim to hurt someone (or something) deliberately, feeling hostility, rejection, intolerance toward the one who is considered different, even reaching the most extreme desire for revenge (Celli, Lai, Duzha, Bosco, & Patti, 2021). Indeed, hate is a social feeling in that it is activated toward another object by experiencing persistent aversion, deep-seated hostility that has no reasons or realistic motivations basis (D'Ambrosio in Germano & Felicetti, 2019).

Another contribution to online hate speech is the absence of empathic feedback. The lack of an immediate and apparent absence of corporeality in a network makes polite and sociable people very aggressive and hostile (Zauberei, 2017, pp. 52-53)²⁵.

A complex, multi-dimensional reading²⁶, where politics, emotions, and communication (including mediated by new media and social networks) are intertwined. Sociology has to bring out these complexities and provide further insights, especially in pandemic and crisis times and in the online dimension.

5. (DIGITAL) POPULISM AND EMOTIONS IN POLITICS: A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

That emotions play a central role in political dynamics is well known. Fischer, Abadi and Duyvendak (2019) say, “some people think that populist voters are more emotional than those who vote for conservatives, liberals or democrats”. But this aspect needs to be better discussed and investigated.

First of all, it is crucial to give the meaning of the word “populism” as “morally pure and entirely unified people to a corrupt and morally inferior elite” (Müller, 2017, p. 20). In other words, any political movement directed at the demagogic exaltation of the

²⁴ Council of Europe (CEO) & European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) (2015).

²⁵ See also the Bandura's moral disengagement.

²⁶ Consider the new Metaverse and the possible implications for political communication and political propaganda.

qualities and abilities of the working classes²⁷.

According to Bakker, Rooduijn and Schumacher (2016), populist voters (both left and right) are less agreeable, and they believe in conspiracy theories (Castanho Silva, Vegetti, & Littvay, 2017). They are, therefore, warier. Populism may succeed precisely because it reflects those feelings of frustration, anxiety, and anger connected to the general social crisis.

In a recent study conducted by the University of Amsterdam in 15 different European countries (Abadi, Cabot, Duyvendak, & Fischer, 2020), over 8000 people, emotional factors are indeed the main elements that predict populist attitudes, including socio-economic factors (Abadi et al., pp.23-24). More negative emotions are shared among populists as threat, unfairness, frustration or derogation, as mentioned above in light of the online dimension between real and digital connection.

A study was also conducted in Italy on Italian political leaders' communication strategies to engage Facebook users (Martella & Bracciale, 2022, pp. 65-85). Facebook was the main political leader during the 2018 general election campaign. Results state that negative connotation emotional communication strategies are adopted less in populist political leaders than users; that emotions in the political communication dimension attract the most and trigger users online, making them interact and be more visible and viral and, finally, that "love reactions are influenced by blaming the 'dangerous others', while angry reactions are not affected by the presence of populist references" (Ibidem).

Once again, emotions as behavioural predictors²⁸ are indicators to be considered if we want to imagine the behaviours and political choices, even of the populist movement, which by definition is a group of people/voters that places feelings and emotions at the centre as a means of communication and assertion of demands and needs.

To complement what is reported here, populism (including digital populism) is a new organization mode (Taggart, 2004); interesting is the reading that Calise and Musella (2019) pose to online populist leaders. In social media and networks, they have found a fundamental field of social and political legitimacy. For this reason, it is possible to speak about "platform leadership" (Nunziata, 2021, p. 132). Leadership lies somewhere between the mechanisms of platformization and the personalization of politics (Giardiello, 2021, p. 347).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Emotion's role in politics is pervasive both because emotion enables past experience to be encoded with its evaluative history and because emotion enables contemporary circumstances to be quickly evacuated. (Marcus, 2000, pp. 221-250)

As I have tried to synthesize, but not exhaustively, it is necessary to consider emotions in their broader dimension of crucial elements reflexivity, even in the political and political-social communication sphere. An "emotional reflexivity" is fundamental

²⁷ See social identity theory and in-group out-group processes and dynamics.

²⁸ See what happened on Capitol Hill, in 2021.

to read (Slaby & von Scheve, 2019) behaviours and ideas that are online and go viral, thanks to a massive political campaign.

Emotions can also be read in micropolitical terms as a 1. possibility and a way to maintain or increase one's status; as a 2. means of approaching those outside the plotted social circle; 3. to a public that is less and less inclined to become thoroughly informed (Cerulo, 2014, p. 53).

“Emotions such as fear, hope, anxiety and optimism are cultivated as part of the attempts of future consultancies to position themselves in the competitive market of political ideas and ideologies” (Garsten & Sörbom, 2021, p. 30).

Online emotions, as political and social elements, can direct collective action and translate into terms of more or less democratic forms of government, depending on their use and context. They are powerful weapons that, if not well used or worse manipulated, can decide the fate of society.

Emotions are social; in this sense, they are the “emotional maps” that enable us to disentangle ourselves in the confusing world from our own identity to that of others in behavioural flow. They represent, expressly, the way of feeling the world and reacting to it in a rational dimension. They “influence our languages and our social actions; they represent resources for understanding and interpreting ourselves, others, and the social reality of which we are navigators...” (Cerulo, 2014, p. 7).

An individual is a conscious social subject capable of a-sensing his or her own and others' emotions, grasping their most profound meaning and using them rationally according to specific management rules that spill over into the acts and, therefore, into the relationship.

This skill, like many others, needs to be trained and presupposes educational attention, especially for the younger generations who speak languages, including emotional, technologically oriented ones, where there are emotional rules that need to be rethought, re-mediated and shared.

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