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REALITY VERSUS EMOTIONS IN ITALIAN JOURNALISM[1]

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Abstract

Italian infotainment, with the recent shift "from information to sensation" has made the question of the ethical dimension of newsmedia even more problematic, showing unforeseen consequences of the show perspective in newscoverage. In the paper the theme of social responsibility of the journalistic media is presented in connection with the recent changes of the digital media and their blurring of real and fiction, as well as of languages and narrative styles. A critical perspective of the "Italian declination" of show-journalism will focus on the relationship between vision of the sufferings offered to distracted viewers of planetary audiences and their concrete possibilities of a consequent action.

Keywords

News, reality, effects, journalistic profession, Italy.

Resumen

El infoentretenimiento italiano, tras el reciente giro "de la información a la sensación" ha hecho aún más problemática la cuestión de la dimensión ética de los medios de comunicación, mostrando consecuencias imprevistas de la perspectiva del espectáculo en

la cobertura de noticias. En el artículo se trata el tema de la responsabilidad social de los medios periodísticos en relación con los cambios recientes de los medios digitales y su confusión entre realidad y ficción, así como entre lenguajes y estilos narrativos. Una perspectiva crítica de la "declinación italiana" del periodismo televisivo se centrará en la relación entre la visión de los sufrimientos que se le orece a los distraídos espectadores del público planetario y sus concretas posibilidades de una acción consecuente.

Palabras clave

Noticias, realidad, efectos, profesión periodística, Italia.

Introduction

In this paper, we present different perspectives of the *new* and problematic relationship among newsmedia and reality in Italy, in order to underline the permanence of some traditional features of Italian journalism as well as the emergence of a *different* style of reporting. This change is connected both to the success of infotainment and to the pervasive use of social media: they make not only a redefinition of the *social role* of news "necessary", but they also impose the need to understand the new emerging forms of a *free* formation of political will via mass and social media. As a matter of fact, the contemporary Italian communication circuit among institutional sources, journalists and citizens outlines a new information ecosystem, a framework in which there is a changed perception of journalism itself, of its ability to "tell stories" about society.

From being considered a *serious activity*, able to connect people to the world, Italian journalism nowadays privileges a softer and more recreational use of news, imposed by the success of the market model that considers news as a *manufactured good* journalists have to sell to audiences (Agostini, 2004; Morcellini, 2011) Therefore, news are no longer "the sense-making practice of modernity" (Hartley, 1996, p. 32). Even if many scholars have speculated that news builds expectations of a common, shared world and that, in the last two centuries, "it has become a dominant force in the public construction of common experience and a popular sense of what is real and important" (Schudson, 2003, p. 13; Zelizer, 2004).

We will investigate the Italian case in order to identify the main factors that have created the contemporary hybrid flows and complex dynamics, by focusing on two fundamental topics of the scientific debate. On one hand, the success of spectacular frame in Italian journalism, which was brought about by the progressive adoption of exhibition logic (Postman, 1985; Debord, 1995; Codeluppi, 2007) in a traditionally "peculiar" information system, often presented as an *anomaly* among Western countries by scholars (Murialdi, 2006; Rizzuto, 2009). From the 90s, infotainment changed not only the interaction among political actors, news professionals and citizens but also the "meaning" itself of news, linked to the social, political and economic characteristics of this context. On the other hand, the focus will be on the current configuration of the relationship between real and fictional newsmedia coverage and its impact on the ideal of journalism as an activity vital to a functioning democracy (Mazzoleni, 1998): as Mulgan argued "we now live in a world in which fantasy and reality are impossible to distinguish" (1994: p. 27; Lorusso, 2018; Riva, 2018).

The main consequence of the recent development of a kind of *news-as-entertainment* and *entertainment-as-news* is that nowadays the *power of press*, complained by many people, seems much more dangerous since viewers have to live in a fictional world, where there is a great deal of material that is interesting or attractive but not important. If we assert that the news influences its audiences by establishing a web of meanings and presuppositions in relation to which people act and live their lives, the increasing mix of fictional and factual reporting builds a new distorted world, full of spectacular events or horrible crimes. This mediated reality does not encourage a complete vision of problems and social emergencies; on the contrary, it makes the distance between vision and action larger since individuals are satisfied by simply being "passive witnesses" at home. In this paper, we propose a path that will connect the *Italian infotainment*, its narrative styles and lexical choices, to the theme of social responsibility of the media; in other words, we want to suggest an interpretative hypothesis of what can be called the "Italian declination" of *show-journalism* that has recently emerged (Rizzuto, 2018), as a production of news for recreational use (Lo Verde, 2012) with an extraordinary exploit of crime news.

From the advocacy model to infotainment in Italy

In the age of infotainment, a wide scientific literature focused on the theme of the transformations of journalism (Thomas, 1990; Thussu, 2007), especially in reference to the digital revolution. Contemporary disputes on the borders of what can (or cannot) be defined as "journalism" lead back to the problematic definition of journalistic identity, to its fundamental values and its relationship to the context newsrooms live in (McQuail, 2001; Pratellesi, 2004; Sorice, 2009). In all Western countries, journalism was born in connection with the emergence of representative democracy and maintained for decades a privileged relationship with politics, since it performed a crucial function: to make public, visible, and accessible politics to the majority of citizens and to offer a platform for debate (Thompson, 1995). Therefore, considering "visibility" as an element inherent to the democratic state and as a fundamental *modus operandi* towards citizens, the *communication factor has always had a key role*: it allows individuals to be informed, to access and to participate. Consequently, newsmedia have been recognized as relevant for public dynamics. As McQuail argued, they are not only a business, because they perform tasks that contribute to the progress of the whole society, especially in the cultural and political sphere (Graber, McQuail & Norris, 1998).

In the last century, media *social responsibility* has become the theoretical paradigm underlying Western journalism, from which all the deontological codes of the press are derived (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956), even if with relevant *national* declinations. Schudson (2003) identified three models of journalism on the global scene, which the scientific literature has referred to: 1) the *market* model; 2) the *advocacy* model; 3) the *trustee* model. The central premise of the *market* model is that journalists must provide the audience with everything it wants: the reader-viewer is, above all, a consumer, and therefore, the job of the reporter is always to satisfy the customer for the interest of the sponsors. On the contrary, in the *advocacy* model, journalists are agents for dissemination of the positions of a specific political party: they consider themselves as *political actors* and use newspapers as political weapons to defend a point of view. This category includes newspapers published by communities or ethnic groups as well as the party press. And last, the *trustee* model is the closest to the "myth" of Anglo-Saxon journalism. According to it, newsmedia must provide the audience with the information for a conscious and complete participation to the public life of a country. Therefore, journalists are considered as the repositories of public trust: they must control leaders, seek the truth and offer objective news for the exercise of democratic rights. Since the end of the 20th century, this *fiduciary* model has become universally recognized as the basis of the profession, with its principle of *objectivity* and a clear separation between facts and opinions.

In the history of Italian journalism, the dominant model was the advocacy one, even if, recently, a process of hybridization with the characteristics of the other models has taken place (Rizzuto, 2012). Hallin and Mancini (2004) included Italian journalism in the Mediterranean or *pluralist-polarized* model: according to them, in Italy, like in other Southern European countries, there is a *peculiar* relationship between the media and politics because capitalism and democracy developed later than in other contexts. This "slow" and "recent" transition to political democracy produced the tendency to consider media as instruments of political mobilization and to use them not to inform but to *participate* to politics. As a consequence, newspapers have often been used as *microphones* of politics, to offer visibility to leaders (Marletti,18984; Marini, 2006; Rizzuto, 2009).

In this perspective, therefore, the characteristics of the political system would have strongly influenced the evolution of the newsmedia and their high degree of *political parallelism*. This "anomalous proximity" between journalists and politicians has given rise to a *sclerosis* of the information circuit from politics to citizens, with the exclusion of the latter as active actors of the democratic debate. At the same time, the fragile expan-

sion of the commercial media market has strengthened the economic dependence on the State, the parties, the Church, preventing the development of newsmedia as autonomous institutions (Hallin, Mancini, 2004) until the 90s. Only in the last three decades the emergence of commercial television and the success of its language and formats made a radical change possible (Castronovo & Tranfaglia, 1994; Forgacs, 2000; Murialdi, 2006; Bergamini, 2006). We can assert that an Anglosaxon news model, based on the watchdog ideal of neutrality and control of politicians, affirmed in a *peculiar mix* with the commercial perspective. For the first time in Italy, market became important in news. According to Schudson (2003), news is a product and must be sold to an audience; as a consequence, journalistic programs must attract people. In other words, there is no longer a rigid separation between informative and commercial goals.

As a matter of fact, contemporary Italian journalism presents some peculiarities deriving from its traditional parallelism to politics, still important for many journalists, as well as newsdramas (Bennett, 1988) and the new central role of social media, with the decline of professionalism and the success of many forms of unmediated political communication. In two decades, the traditional role of journalists almost disappeared: a *light* use of news, focused on emotions and conflicts, superficial and banalizing complexity, are now more important than the "old" moral duty to create informed citizens. News changed into newsdramas and they mix reality and fiction, events and reconstructions. Media prefer short, visual stories, full of emotive elements with an actor (hero or villain) at the centre, offering essentially melodramatic accounts of current events. The consequence of the enterntaining news narratives is the banalization of public debate and the selection of themes, problems and facts, only if they can be easily transformed into a *fictional* representation: a drama. At the same time, many themes or events are completely ignored and when it presentes a clear explication of what happens, it uses a lot of stereotypes and definitions, thus making reality simplified, dramatized, fragmented and personalized. Therefore, a clear demarcation between news and entertainment in the Italian information system no longer exists: this blurring is particularly evident in crime news content, in which even the most serious and violent crimes are reported with an entertaining perspective, focusing on the emotional reaction of audiences (Lo Verde, 2012). The transition "from information to sensation" (Santos 2009) and the prevailing of the *reality show logic* made the issue of the ethical dimension of newsmedia more problematic due to the unforeseen political consequences, too often declining as risks, of the dominat frames in the news.

Italian *infotainment* represents, therefore, a crucial turning point with its complete fusion of information and show: news, above all the political ones, has a narrative

scheme with different segments and actors, so that it is not possible for the viewers to separate political reality from media re-construction of politics. A dangerous consequence is that perception of social problems and priorities are influenced by these media-narratives that are pleasant, appealing as well as exaggerated and distorted (Froio, 2000; Polesana, 2010; Rizzuto, 2012). According to Altheide (1991), politics became *media-politics,* reported by journalists as a world full of winners and losers, heores and villains, leaders' private life at the centre and political issues used as weapons against the enemies. Moreover, media coverage tends to present to immense television bored audiences not only information because reporters prefer the *exhibition* of the sufferings of real human beings.

In an era sadly characterized by different dangers (like terrorism or wars), the dominance of the show perspective in the news greatly reduces the possibility of concrete intervention on problems and emergencies, although this *orientation towards action* is usually presented by journalists as the main justification for the planetary show of cruelty they daily offer to their receivers. This illusory premise is based on a concept of news as an instrument of active participation to democratic life, which today has lost credibility. As a matter of fact, a voyeuristic attitude often prevails in the audiences and newscoverage; like any other fictional product, it aims to arouse intimate emotions, without activating the passage from the spectator to the actor, which Bauman considered crucial (Bauman 2015). The new centrality of the emotional dimension has become one of the weak points from which the recent success of the spectacular news about pain has been analysed. For example, a recurring theme of media criticism and their sensationalism is the lack of respect of the victims as well as the audiences' hidden reasons to watch sufferings or cruelty. In addition, the excessive journalistic description of cruelty and death has often strenghtened the suspicion about the authenticity of viewers' altruistic desire to help others. In our era of prevailing digital narcisism dominated by images (Codeluppi, 2009; Mitchell, 2012), the accusations of trivial voyeurism or, even more severe, complete indifference are plausible (Dal Lago, 2012).

From true to plausible: the triumph of emotions in Italian journalism

The problematic relationship between reality and newscoverage of the facts emerges from the definition of news as an *account of an event, written by someone in a context,* and not as the event itself. As a consequence, it is evident the specificity of the

news as a "cultural product made through a dense negotiation that takes place and is defined in different social contexts" (Sorrentino, 2002, p. 9). Today's technological possibilities of reproduction of reality, and the pervasive dissemination of events' images, impose the problem of media coverage and its relationship with the real. This is a crucial issue for any democracy not only in terms of those possible *manipulation risks,* highlightned by propaganda *theory* (Bentivegna, 2009; Livolsi, 2011), but also about how media decontextualize and present reality fragments within their formats that influence people on a cognitive level.

Western tradition has inherited (from Plato and, later, from Christianity) a kind of *hostility* towards appearance: the idea that representation is a deceptive form, based on the difference between the image-copy (exact copy of a model) and the image-simulacrum; it is also an artificial representation that does not resemble to any original and produces false appearances. Electronic media continued the abstraction operation started by the classical theatre and the press until the simultaneous saturation of our context in which media representations of reality are dominant. However, according to Simone, the computer screen is the most significant change in the relationship between reality and fiction that has occurred (Simone, 2012, p. 192), imposing a reorganization of journalism as a "true" story of the world. With digital media there is not only the possibility of a representation-photography of the real but also that of an intensified reality, often replacing *the real reality* because it is more fascinating. Individual experiences are increasingly lived through mediated representations and, at the same time, newsrooms create *pseudo-events*, artificial events which appear natural and spontaneous but that are prepared only to be reported (Boorstin, 1962) According to Baudrillard, a process of disintegration of reality is the main consequence of the simulation made possible by the media. He argued that technological progress has been characterized by the tendency to replace the world with a simulacrale reality, made of representations totally created by human beings. However, the simulacra are copies of copies, which are postponed without end to one another and of which there are no originals (Baudrillard, 1976, p. 72). Therefore, it becomes more and more difficult to make a clear distinction between reality and its reproduction. For journalism, this lack of distinction is a potentially devastating *vulnus* because its fundamental role in a democratic context is based on "objectivity" and professional capacity of telling real facts impartially.

In the contemporary circuit of Italian information system, it is possible to underline a process of a growing confusion between real and imaginary, connected to the evolution of the television market from a public monopoly to a mixed duopoly completed

in the 80s. The success of private TV, above all the Berlusconi's channels, let the public television (RAI) to find new strategies in order to have larger audiences for the sponsors (Barbano, 2012). A different style in news reporting (from an *information* model to a *story* model) was one of the most successful ways to occupy the market: the starting point of a "televised" use of the reality, offered like a show, dates back to the coverage of the tragedy of Vermicino in 1981, which marked the birth of the *spectacle of pain* as a successful media frame in journalism. The mixture of *fictional,* understood as a story of an invented event, and of a *factual* story, that is the story of a happened one (Cava, 2013, p. 29), transformed a real place into a set, producing a new kind of information. By using a fixed frame, the viewers watched a horrible spectacle with no possibility of escape: millions of Italians became witnesses of the horrible spectacle of death for the first time presented on live TV. In the tragic "real" story of the 8 years old boy died after a long agony, there were already all the elements of contemporary infotainment: a set, the crowd of journalists, a long tv live-program, the phone calls frm the audience. The huge emotions caused by this event imposed to Italian public opinion the crucial theme of the border between news and show and which limits to the spectacularization of private tragedies newsmedia should respect.

At the end of the 80s, with Guglielmi's *truth-television*, Italian TV became an open laboratory on reality, with information programmes that used the language of the show for the first time. They aimed to tell reality in all its aspects (Cava, 2013, p. 25 et passim): for this reason, they reconstructed and presented news events with scenes, perfomed by actors who, activating cinematic mechanisms of storytelling, "showed" the fact and aroused emotions in the viewers. By erasing the distance between life and entertainment (Casetti, 2001), the boundaries between real and fiction have been progressively lost and a "new popular narrative" became successful (Grasso, 2000). A sort of "neorealism" in which, like cinema, reality is reproduced while events are happening, and events become media texts, where the expressive logic of the script and traditional reporting are completely blended (Buonanno, 1999). However, just by bringing the normality of the daily life into TV, this medium begins to devour reality and anticipates the distinctive feature of reality shows: the visibility of the technical apparatus. The pedagogical approach of the *truth-tv* (which offered a public service to citizens by giving information about real emblematic facts) soon joined the curiosity of the viewers in front of painful events: stories are told with a new television language that combines "the somewhat ambiguous attraction linked to the unravelling of enigmatic, criminal situations, to the fascination of live confessions" (Menduni, 2007, p. 29). The process of spectacularization

of tragedies began with the voyeurism of the trial, which, for the first time, put viewers in front of the television narrative of real crimes with real courts and lawyers: the most famous examples are programs like "*Un giorno in pretura*" or, some years later, "*Amore criminale*". Reality is thus fragmented and packaged, with fiction narrative techniques (above all of the detective novels) that favor suspence or mysteries and feelings have a greater space.

In the new successful journalistic formats slowly the line between information and entertainment disappears and the logic of unveiling prevails: most newsdramas assume the existence of a secret they "must" reveal and "exhibit, with some complacency, authentic scenes of private life on the public square" (Abruzzese-Farci, 2010, p. 87-88). Therefore, since the 1990s, reality has been permanently transferred into the Italian television screen, tending to be confused with its representation. The most successful result of this process is offered by the reality show, in which the conscious television exposure of some indviduals is presented as real life even if it is a television fiction built with a script, a direction and a cast. In reality shows, emotion is at the center, intimacy is revealed and the TV narratives make the line between what's inside and what's off-screen disappear. According to Virilio, in 38 countries *The Big Brother* has made possible a process of "globalization of affections" and "synchronisation of emotion" (Virilio, 2006; Bauman, 2014), a planetary sharing of feelings and emotions, which led to the dominance of emotionality as a way of accessing and knowing the real. In Italy, a spectacle of news about crime and tragedy has become dominant in the last two decades: in this kind of information reality is considered like a simple platform on which journalists build intriguing and exciting info-entertaining programs (Marsh & Melville, 2009).

If journalism is understood above all emotionally, the main task of news professionals becomes now to provide exciting stories. In order to offer emotionally engaging narratives, newsmaking thus favors special effects, excess of horrors, sex and violence, preferring a suggestive content than a more relevant but "boring" problem. In infotainment, the television looks at the world, with a fascination for violent images and the staging of lives and emotions; therefore, it requires modes of emotional or aesthetic enjoyment. Conseuently, journalism no longer helps to the reflection or a rational participation of the viewers, aiming only at their superficial and disengaged reaction to the "spectacle of the sufferings" presented by news. The main consequence is that nowadays "*the media viewer watches and enjoys, thinks little and evaluates even less. In this way, there is a progressive distance between the aesthetics (subjective) of the fragment and*

individual ethics. Things seen are clearly false or built only to attract attention" (Livolsi, 2006, p. 163). Therefore, the planetary pervasiveness of the media has changed the relationship between individuals and reality, in particular in front of the unprecedented possibility of seeing the pain of other human beings in his domestic intimacy, posing problems not new to the viewer (Surette, 2007).

The relationship between the vision of reality and the consequent action to intervene and put an end to the suffering of others is a constant theme in Western culture that has seen, even if with different variations, the repudiation of cruelty and the affirmation of moral obligation of the intervention if one knows the pains of others. Nevertheless, in our "century of spectators" (Bauman, 2015), it seems to have affirmed what Dal Lago (2012) has acutely defined indifference, connected to a paradoxical visual annihilation of wars and massacres. When the suffering person is real, as in the case of news, adherence to reality as well as the direct vision of the pain of others, constitute a problem at two different levels: firstly, they impose attention to the problem of the possible push to action, that journalism could favour because it informs about wars or massacres and citizens became planetary eyewitnesses. No one can say: "I did not know". Moreover, there is the problem of the narrative style to be adopted by newsmedia, in order to make the reporting on distant sufferings of real people understandable, and above all, acceptable. According to Boltansky, the choice of a purely factual description should be excluded: "just try to imagine how it much might be *inhuman* to describe this show (for example, a hanging or the victims of a terroristic attack) in a purely factual style" (Boltansky, 2000, p. 35). In this perspective, the subject-object device (Lorusso & Violi, 2008), typical of the factual description, may be criticized when it concerns people, because it is asymmetrical since the victim is the object of a description that gives entire control to the descriptor (Boltansky, p. 36). As a result, a coldly referential style could show an unacceptable detachment of the witness/journalist. In addition, it would be necessary to establish even how a reporter may describe the rawest details of the pain of others, since the concern to arouse pity should always ensure the "respect" of the victim. Thus, it becomes more and more important the problem of the "type" of attention given to the object of the news story: a reporting style that lingers in the realistic description of the horrible details may be criticized because it fully qualifies the person with his or her suffering or, on the contrary, it may be accused of subtracting this suffering from the individual who suffers it, in order to create a show for the audiences, producing forms of secondary victimization (Gili, 2006; Muraskin Domash, 2007; Giomi Magaraggia, 2017).

Journalism should have, by definition, the problem of separating real emotions from fictional emotions. Nevertheless, the emotion provoked today by the news occupies an unstable position between real and false, because suffering is offered as a spectacle but also presented as real to a spectator who, however, remains safe in his home environment, away from events (Boruah, 1988). Newsmedia may activate different reactions: from compassionate participation to indignation or indifference. According to Boltansky, a proposal of commitment is made to the viewer because an observer (the journalist) tells him a story in which he describes a suffering, also suggesting a mode of commitment; the user can accept it, he can be indignant, he can move, he can just feel pleasure in front of the victim's torture but he can also, freely, refuse (Boltansky, 2000, p. 236). From a radically critical perspective, Dal Lago speaks of a planetary show of the suffering that the media build and daily feed: according to this author, their most important result is the diffusion of a deep indifference of Westerners towards cruel actions and victims far away, a terrible "look parasitism" on cruelty and war, typical signal of hypocrisy and voyeurism (Dal Lago, 2012, p. 9-20) that influences global policies and priorities.

The television medium opens up the possibility of a pure viewer, as he is perfectly dependent on the scene that contemplates and does not participate to the action physically. In fact, in the media journalistic representation, each viewer is involved in a mediated quasi-interaction (Thompson, 1998): he can see without being seen. Therefore, on TV nothing symbolizes his or her commitment because the show is detached from the domestic context and the place of the observer can be occupied by anyone else. There is, therefore, a substantial inaccessibility of the action.

The main risk is the unacceptable drift of contemporary journalism towards the exasperated search for emotions, which places it far away from the model of the habermasian rational "public space", where the individuals used newspapers as basis of argumentation and political participation. In this perspective, journalism was the engine of the public sphere and the democratic system because it favoured the fundamental moment of engagement, that of the passage from a passive spectator to an actor. Nevertheless, from the origin of modern journalism, there have always been a tension between two contradictory needs: a need for impartiality, detachment (a preliminary non-commitment) and a distinction between the moment of observation, of knowledge, and the moment of action as opposed to the need for a deep emotional, sentimental involvement, which is "justified" as an indispensable instrument to arouse commitment and action. Different journalistic models have proposed peculiar variations of these needs (Schudson,

2003; Briggs Burke, 2002; Hallin Mancini, 2004; Costa, 2010). The issue is still central to the contemporary debate on the role of information that oscillates between a clearly weakened normative conception of the profession (Grossi, 2004) and new digital news-making practices (Eugeni, 2015).

Conclusions

In a context in which the boundary between true and plausible has become opaque, the ambiguous connection between the logic of emotainment and the duty of telling true stories calls for a reflection on many crucial "issues" of the scientific debate about journalism. The most relevant is the new role of the viewer, who has become both a news-producer and a performer, the difficulty of controlling the content and, above all, the quality and professional competences of the journalistic sources in the internet era. As a matter of fact, in the new ecology of contemporary media, one of the distinctive features of Italian journalism is the process of a systemic *hybridization*: this can be considered not only as the result of the dismantling of traditional news production organizations, but also as the consequence of deep changes in professional logic (Jenkins, 2006; Splendore, 2017), that are leaving too much space for fake news or untrusted sources, with huge repercussions on credibility and social perception of journalism. *Hybridization* process deeply influences the interaction between audiences, leaders and journalists: a pervasive use of social media and new communicative strategies, built without the mediation of traditional newsmedia professionals, are more and more preferred by politicians. These forms of direct interaction with citizens, with a complete *disintermediation* in the communicative circuit can be considered as a revolution not only political but also cultural, since it affects the way people perceive the meaning and the role of the journalists, increasingly described as obstacles, or manipulators. This is a challenge not only for representative democracy but also for communication studies, because the traditional Western conception of news media, as an arena of the public sphere, was based on a rigid separation among roles, languages, information and entertainment areas, which does not exist any longer. On the contrary, hybridization, the blurring between discursive fields, contents and formats emerges as the peculiar characteristics of the informative flood we live in (Splendore, 2017).

The definition of journalism as a cultural product achieved through a *dense* negotiation that takes place and is defined in specific social contexts (Sorrentino, 2008) is

the one that best underlines its reconstructive character of society and the link with the political, cultural and economic environment in which every information system operates. In Italy, the new communication circuit among institutional sources, political actors, journalists and citizens, outlines a different information ecosystem, a framework in which there is a changed perception of the *communication factor* and its role in democratic life: consequently, the traditional ontological borders among information and entertainment, news and goods, citizien and consumer as well as public and commercial teevision are disappearing.

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