



News Making, COVID 19 Pandemic: A Radical Analysis on Risk on Waste Management

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Abstract

The COVID 19 outbreak has triggered a global emergency. The corona virus crisis has led to a radical change in the space-time of everyday life. Workplaces and public spaces have been closed. The physical and social differentiation of the spaces of everyday life collapsed. Words such as lockdown, corona virus, personal protective equipment, isolation, physical distancing, spill over, zero patients, positive patient, intensive care, suppression, attenuation, have entered into the common language by configuring the language in a almost warlike terms. The logic of language always has some evidence and, in the current pandemic, the defence of human health seems to become a detailed conflict on the invasion of the virus, and in this specific semantic basin, every nuance seems to lose its meaning and everything becomes radical. In emergency times, waste management becomes, or rather, returns to be a serious and complex problem.

Keywords: Complexity; Media; COVID 19; Waste Management; Communication

Introduction

Endless challenges

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic presents a number of challenges which, at current status (June 2020), the Western Societies seem not to be ready to respond. Among the many challenges there is that of finding those indicators in the quality of urban services in a space that, during the pandemic, underwent a reconfiguration. In this complex and articulated emergency, the impact of the corona virus covid 19 is still partially unknown today. Neither in Italy nor in other countries is know the actual number of total infections, among which they are included both those diagnosed as positive, and those who have experienced mild symptoms (symptomatic pauci); even the many asymptomatic who have not even noticed the infection. Probably it will never be possible to know exactly the impact of covid 19, but what is certain is that the corona virus has changed the lives of human beings and has caused a real systemic crisis. A crisis that can be read in the perspective of the so-called risk society (*Risikogesellschaft*).

More than thirty years have passed since the publication of the book *Risikogesellschaft* by Ulrich Beck [1], more than lustre by the World Risk Society [2] and just eleven years by *Weltrisikogesellschaft. Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Sicherheit* [3] The reflective realism contained in this formidable trilogy by Ulrich Beck, the subject of infinite, continuous and constant reflections between the scholars of the humanities, social sciences and experts in human security, has taken on the scope of a general rethinking of the theoretical system which starting from Luhmann, Bauman, Giddens and Scott Lash [4-6] it can be seen as a solid theory of reflexivity in the society of risk, that of a society under siege. The corona virus has connected the world to keep it in check; human being has never known such a completely universal threat. I remember, in this regard, how the challenge of sociology to the society of risk can be inscribed in the wake of its scientific tradition, a modern project in the Comtean path for which prediction derives from science and action from prediction. Sociology aimed to know its own object so as to be able to guess with certainty in which direction it tended to move and therefore to discover what could and should be done if one wanted to steer it in the right direction.

And the object to be known, analyzed and eventually shaped was human society: that condition in which (to refer to Marx's famous expression) man made his biographical / historical choices, but from which it was not itself exempt » [5]. And it is precisely on these choices that society exists, between the solidarity of a humanity that recognizes itself and the solidarity of a mutual destruction and «no exercise in rhetoric or to label labels will cancel this choice» [5].

A reading of the effects of the covid-19 outbreak could associate the disease in the interpretative hinges that projects thought into the field of a saturated world, in the reality of the risk society, a fear society «Fear is arguably the most sinister of demons nesting in the open societies of our time. But it is the insecurity of the present and uncertainty about the future that hatch and breed the most awesome and least bearable of our fears. Those insecurities and uncertainties, in their turn, are born of the sense of impotence: we seem to be no longer in control, whether singly, severally or collectively. To make things worse yet, we lack the tools that could allow politics to be lifted to the level where power has already settled, and so enable us to recover and repossess control over the forces that shape our shared condition while setting the range of our options and the limits to our freedom to choose: control which has now slipped or has been torn out of our hands» [7]. In another perspective, Beck identified the birth of the risk society through two paths [1]: the spread of real dangers related to the uncontrollable side effects of technological and industrial progress and that of constructivism which, on the other hand, tends to give relevance to the discursive conditions that schematise and make reality visible of global risk: a way of seeing and representing reality with tools and sensitivities different from the past.

Within this frame and among the many possible observations in relation to the level of uncertainty and insecurity of the contemporary in the Covid 19 outbreak is the eccentricity of the languages of science, words that then pass through the effervescent and increasingly impoverished language of news making with surprising rapidity and selectivity. Words such as lockdown, corona virus, personal protective equipment, isolation, physical distancing, spill over, zero patients, positive patient, intensive care, suppression, attenuation, have entered into the common language by configuring the language in a almost warlike terms. The logic of language always has some evidence and, in the current pandemic, the defence of human health seems to become a war on the invasion of the virus, and, in this semantic basin, every nuance seems to lose its meaning and everything becomes radical. An incomprehensible event that cannot be recognized and thus a direct language have been used to channel and spread anxieties and fears.

The uncertainty and insecurity gained in recent months

will have to push intellectuals and scientific researchers to seek new interpretations of the world, that is to say new ideas to trace the horizons of meaning within which the human being of the XXI should move century. In this specific interpretative perspective, the distinction between ideas and beliefs is fundamental. The ideas are in fact inventions, individual and private creations, which, however, already offer themselves publicly and immediately in the daily life of the social actor in the form of beliefs, of opinions crystallized over time. The latter, although ideas are in this sense endowed with a decided degree of reality and are in fact more efficient than ideas in guaranteeing stability within inter-subjective relationships, in their being accepted as factual data are perceived as completely external to the individual and unrelated to his life experience. The possibility that there is a incorrect reading or a manipulation to produce ideas from the scientific literature should remember, especially in times of crisis, the importance of science and knowledge of science. Scientific literacy is used variously in one or more of the following ways: (1) Knowledge of the substantive content of science and the ability to distinguish science from non-science; (2) Understanding science and its applications; (3) Knowledge of what counts as science; (d) Independence in learning science; (4) Ability to think scientifically; (5) Ability to use scientific knowledge in problem solving; (6) Knowledge needed for intelligent participation in science-based social issues; (7) Understanding the nature of science, including its relationships with culture; (8) Appreciation of and comfort with science, including its wonder and curiosity; (9) Knowledge of the risks and benefits of science; (10) Ability to think critically about science and to deal with scientific expertise. A reading of the risk society should always keep in mind these aspects; otherwise the emergency in progress will not only not be read with the threat of losing all the complexity of the phenomenon.

The COVID 19 Outbreak and the Everyday Life

The COVID 19 outbreak has triggered a global emergency. The corona virus crisis has led to a radical change in the space-time of everyday life. Workplaces and public spaces have been closed. The physical and social differentiation of the spaces of everyday life collapsed. The workplace and schools suddenly converged completely with the home as a space of everyday life. The gaps in public life in which we spent free time and transit times in cafes, restaurants, parks, nature, public transport, etc. which created ghost towns and urban ghost rooms. In the face of the corona virus crisis, politicians had to choose between two basic political options, namely either radical everyday routines interrupt and ask the majority of citizens to stay at home or that to interrupt everyday life only minimally. The first option tries to save human beings by using direct communication and social relationships as far as possible be reduced, which

inevitably creates an economic crisis. The second option maintains direct communication and social relationships, endangering lives to try to avoid an economic crisis. The two systemic approaches to emergencies focus on the specificity of the situation. And the emergency is a very interesting situation for human beings because it gives the opportunity to measure themselves against the power of habits, which risk becoming otherwise relentless routines. As if humans were their habits themselves. Ordinary life become more and more so in situations of fear and therefore of little lucidity in evaluating the statistical possibility of risks in modern times. I remember that it is much lower than the typical risks of previous centuries. This is the first society in the history of human beings where, thanks also to technology, there is more security than in the past and yet it feels much more insecure. Considering that the real performing variable of contemporary change is communication, it is impossible not to connect the first cause of all this to the media, or rather to the bad work of some of its professionals [8]. After all, the media were created to keep the public company in the time of change; It is clear then that if the media no longer help human beings to process the change, it means that they turn on their souls, they contribute to hypertension, as if our life was not already per se stimulated. According to Beck as the risk society is portrayed as «also the science, media and information society» [1] and the absence of any consideration of such parallel analyses is perhaps surprising. Again, the emergency presents another very important consequence, that of reminding us of our finitude. Humans beings feel carelessly like a god (luckily with a lowercase letter); they believe themselves strong, while reality continually reminds us that humans are defective machines. Impossible not to note that digital encourages them in this belief. And then everything that questions our survival, the territory of our body and the related claims, ends up becoming unacceptable.

In the situation we are experiencing, media behaviour has not been worse than other times when they have faced emergencies, quite the opposite. And this is a positive note because you can get out of the crisis if you have a project. Otherwise, we are part of the corona virus problem. Too long media have been generous propagators of fear, building a perceptual amplification that is at the origin of the increase in our insecurities. It is not a direct and exclusive cause, but it certainly becomes a comparative one with the past: if you build an emotional communicative style, inspired by the staging of stories and obituaries, it follows that you end up altering the relationship between reality and representation. Also this time the media have dramatically increased the space of perception by creating an unnecessary and useless and often harmful communication bubble. This is how, suddenly, when fear licks us, then we realize that the media do not function exactly as an element that must contribute to reassurance.

Waste Management, Media and Information

It is also essential to remember the historical passage in which the Western World found itself when it was flooded by the health emergency from the outbreak of Covid 19. It represented a blow for our daily expectations and safety, but even more for our health system clearly more appreciated in the emergency situations. As if to give a quality judgment we had to wait for epidemics like this. In this complex frame the covid 19 outbreak show how pathogens interact with economic, political, cultural and social factors to represent a threat to human development and society in an increasingly complex and urbanized world. This complexity it is assumed has a greater degree of connectivity than existent or even possible before. Connectivity is intimately related to notions of technological advances and social possibility. However, the sociologist's scientific commitment should be to read the social complexity in this emergency and try to understand which the places of greatest contagion are and which are the most exposed social groups. According to Bianco [9,10] despite the partiality and poor comparability of the data, the figures allow us to outline some specifics social characteristics of how contagion has been working in Italy. The infections occur mainly inside hospitals and spaces of territorial medicine (60% of the total positive), private homes (25% of the total positive), workplaces (4% of the total positive). Besides, based on the places, the mechanisms of contagion propagation, the variance of the risks in the social groups and different spread of contagion in the regions, we can say that in our country there isn't one epidemic only to deal with, but different epidemic phenomena that have mechanisms from different operations: (A) first, truly impressive, limited to the health system, concerning to a greater extent, but not limited to the North regions, which involves people who are old and in poor health condition; (B) a second phenomenon, linked to the workplace, which affects people of working age, in small numbers; (C) a third location of infection is established from private homes, where the virus is brought from outside by family members who have contact with places infected. In such contexts, often of small dimensions, crowded for the whole day in a promiscuous and without protection, the virus propagation rate (R with 0) is probably very high, however there are no accurate estimates.

The workplaces seem to have been less interested in the spread of the virus also thanks to the effectiveness of the containment measure and according to the smart working practices. The waste management immediately provided with new procedures to reduce the risk to which workers are normally exposed in the waste collection and waste processing but operators will have to distinguish between differentiated and undifferentiated waste of quarantined citizens because are potentially positive. Anyhow, in this outbreak the role of information may have been crucial and

the risk could have been significantly reduced. In particular, the scarce scientific culture of Italy in which journalism has served a significant delay has probably weighed. I remember that before the emergency, communication was building an imbalance in which even disinformation was quantitatively equivalent to information. A situation that has never happened before: usually, disinformation constitutes a peripheral and almost unavoidable part of information. A disinformation or superficial information is an enemy of emergency management, an enemy of human beings that risks producing incorrect procedures that cannot contain the possible dangers of exposure to the corona virus. Dissemination seems an academic discipline rather than the basic paradigm of communication while from this crisis we should get out with a supplement of knowledge. And in this perspective, it took quite a long time, in order to have adequate working procedures also in the household waste collection and treatment.

The corona virus outbreak has highlighted the importance of educating and training all waste operators in complying with all sanitary recommendations. Not understanding the importance of training should be associated with an increased risk of corona virus infection.

The problem of waste management is genuine in this situation and it has an impact especially in the possibility of recycling, within that social and cultural interpretative framework delimited in the circular economy paradigm. The risk is to suspend the collection of municipal waste with a significant impact on the recycling and recovery of packaging waste: paper, glass, and aluminium, plastic and other recyclable materials. A problem that could, in a short time, force recyclers to block, at least in part, the collection of waste collected differently selected from citizens with serious damage to the environment and to the economic and social system.

As a matter of a fact, the importance of the circular economy is fundamental, precisely in times of serious economic crisis. The circular economy it is not characterized

only for the ability to recycle the materials in subsequent cycles productive, generating so an economic added value from waste. But it's also able to promote social and cultural values, generating opportunities of work for the more fragile people. For this reason, correct information production becomes fundamental.

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