

Protecting the Community: Security Practices in London after 7/7

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Il tuo corpo ti manda messaggi misteriosi, che tu accogli
con timore, con ansia. In una parte sconosciuta di questo
corpo s'annida una minaccia, la tua morte è già lì appostata,
i segnali che ti arrivano forse t'avvertono d'un pericolo sepolto
all'interno di te stesso
Un re in ascolto, Italo Calvino

Sammy (voice over): We love our city and we belong to it.
Neither of us are English, we're Londoners you see
Sammy and Rosie get laid, Hanif Kureishi

Ever since 9/11 and 7/7, security policies have been at the top of the political agenda. I will focus my attention on the security campaigns in London by analysing the poster *Trust Your Senses* and the security campaign *Trust Your Instincts*, set up by the Metropolitan Police, in February and March 2007. What is at stake here is the constitution of a subject of community, the Londoner, whose duty is to implement a surveillance and protection practice. Trained to recognise “suspicious behaviour” (a concept that I will try to define by referring to the *Trust Your Instincts* campaign), the subject of community is called to defend the community (and communities) from the threat of a terrorist attack. Comparing these campaigns to Second World War security campaigns, we will see how this strategy consists in transforming the citizens' behaviour in a way that makes it very similar to the behaviour of the Enemy that is supposed to be fought.²

0. Community and Immunity: tracing the border

This paper is a part of my research on identity and conflict in the so-called “War on Terror”. From an epistemological point of view Semiotics sees identity – both at the individual and collective level – as the result of a differential relation, according to the Saussure's seminal work *Cours de linguistique générale* (1922): in language there are only differences and no positive terms. When I approach the problem of identity and how identities are represented in texts or pictures I choose an anti-ontological approach : the individual does not exist *per se* but always as the result of

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a relation with the other; community does not exist without borders and without the (non)relation with what is outside of it. We should think identities always as the result of a difference between entities that always at first co-exist: they exist because they are together (co-).

My work is underpinned by that epistemological assumption and it concerns security practices as a form of constructing memory for a protective purpose, inside what the Italian philosopher, recently translated into English, Roberto Esposito (2004), calls *Immunitarian Paradigm*. Communities need to imagine events and the other (enemies) that must be kept outside the community border: both people (the classical example is the barbarian) or event (catastrophe, epidemic, war, disorder, state of nature, etc.). The purpose of this representation is recognition: for keeping the enemy and the threat out, I must include them vicariously, through representations.

The immunitarian gesture of tracing the border and the difference is the very gesture of the foundation of every community.

1. Terrorist threats and the *Trust Your Senses* campaign

We all know what happened in London on the 7th of July 2005: a series of coordinated bomb blasts hit London's public transport system. It was the largest and deadliest terrorist attack in the history of London: fifty-two people died and seven hundred were injured. Two weeks later another similar attack failed and the terrorists were arrested. The object of my analysis comes from these tragic events.

I will begin with the most important and well-known poster one can see everywhere in London: the *Trust your senses* (from here TYS) poster, where public transport users are asked to be on guard and to tell the police about everything that seemed suspicious. On the top right corner of the poster, we can see the logo 7MILLION LONDONERS/1LONDON. In vertical line, on black background, we can see a blue eye, a brown ear and red lips. Next to the eye, we can read "If you see", next to the ear "or hear anything suspicious", and next to the lips "tell our staff or the police immediately".³ At the end, in bold, the slogan "Trust your senses". Therefore the message is: "if you see or hear anything suspicious, tell our staff or the police immediately. Trust your senses". The last layer, with a white background, contains a list of logos of institutions: Mayor of London, Metropolitan Police, City of London Police, British Transport Police and Transport for London. Based on all these elements, I will try to answer to two questions:

- What are the features of this text and the practice that it involves?
- How does the text construct, semantically, its subjects: the receiver and the sender?

³The poster is clearly inspired by the well-known IBM poster by Paul Rand. (www.paul-rand.com/assets/gallery/posters/ibm.jpg).

1.1. *Trust your senses: security practices and power relations*

The message is a hypothetical sentence: if X, then Y. Mechanisms of protection implemented in our societies work in this way, describing a probable future event that must be avoided and from which society must be defended. This is the logical organization of the law, the mechanism of protection *par excellence*: if the event X, recognizable by the features *a, b, c, etc.*, occurs then Y.

In our case, there is a possible event X, to which the subject must react in a certain way. Michel Foucault in *Security, Territory and Population* described the security practice in this way: “the specific space of security refers then to a series of possible events; it refers to the temporal and the uncertain, which have to be inserted in a given space” (2004, 20).

On the other hand there is the reaction Y that must be enacted by the subject “you”. The subject should put itself in this “field of possibilities” (Foucault 1982, 341) following the given instructions. In fact, the poster is an appeal that the authority addresses to the city (1 London), to its population (7 million Londoners) and to its members in their individual or collective dimension (you). From this point of view the TYS campaign is a form of power relation where the “exercise of the power is a «conduct of conducts» and a management of possibilities” (ib.). In other terms it is an attempt of the authority at leading the behaviour (the conduct) of the citizens.

The enunciative structure of the text reflects the social order as a “system of differentiation that permits one to act upon the action of other” (ib.: 343). We can see that the visual arrangement of the text is similar to a conventional layout: at the top there is the receiver of the message, at the bottom the “signature” of the sender. In this case, on the top there is the logo 7MILLION LONDONERS/1LONDON, and at the bottom, the list of the institutions involved: therefore it is a message that the authority addresses to the population and the members of the community (see § 1.3. for the distinction between community and population).

To understand this crucial point we must look at the enunciative structure of the text: the text is an uttered enunciation (Greimas and Courtès 1979) characterised by the use of referential indices (you, our, your). When we read the text we pretend that a person (the sender) is uttering something to us (receivers) involving the veridictory status of the utterance-discourse (Eco 1979). We call it enunciative contract. Here the enunciative contract implies that the sender is telling the truth.

Senders and receivers are semantically constructed in the text as “Londoners”: the text constructs its circumstances of enunciation. In fact, the effectiveness of the text depends on the physic and semiotic space of the reading: London Transport Network. If we put the TYS poster on a bus in Liverpool, we could clearly see that it would be completely ineffective, because of the semantic peculiarity of the “you”, the “we” and the space involved.

In other words, the text is effective only if one recognizes itself as receiver (you) and this is possible if one defines itself as Londoner, a subject belonging to the community, and by doing so recognizing the power relation. The acceptance of this enunciative contract turns to be the acceptance of what we can call a social contract between an individual and institutions. The social contract implies here the duty of surveillance.

But how is the community represented in the text? The logo 7MILLION LONDONERS/1LONDON plays a very important role in this domain. Firstly, I think that this type of campaign tries to build a sense of belonging by enabling people to imagine the community, and to imagine themselves as part of it. The logo evokes the community: seven million people unified in the same organism, the city of London.

1.2. The One London Campaign

Going back over the story of the logo, we can see it was born immediately after 7/7. In fact a few days after the attack, the Mayor of London and the Great London Authority launched the *One London Campaign*, which is still on. The slogan of the campaign is *We are Londoners, we are One*.

On the official website,⁴ it is possible to buy stickers, badges and posters with different logos: ONE LONDON, WE ARE LONDONERS (with the part “one” in red) and 7MILLION LONDONERS/1LONDON.

Actually, at first, the logo 7MILLION LONDONERS/1LONDON, was a poster put up in particular around the stations hit by the attack, and just after the normalisation of the tube service, the logo ONE LONDON was used in the London Transport poster “We stand united with our customers”. In different versions of this poster, we can see pictures of London Transport employees: men, women, black and white, old and young people, some wearing ethnic garments (for example a *dastar*, the traditional Sikh turban). And the text says:

We stand united with our customers

When an incident occurs, we place our lives in each other’s hands. Depending on who is on shift at London Underground these hands could be black or white, male or female, young or old. We work in diverse multifaith environment and acknowledge our responsibility for each other. We are united in the face of these attacks.

Londoners will not be divided

On the other hand the website is clearly tailored to strengthen the sense of belonging and communality and, even today, everyone can express the pride of being a Londoner: there is a little square, on the homepage, where one can see a list of names (in bold), displayed with the sentence

⁴ <http://www.london.gov.uk/onelondon/>

“is proud to be a Londoner”. Everyone can put down their names by clicking on “pledge your support”, opening another page where is written:

Proud to be a Londoner

Stand up and be counted. If you're proud to be Londoner, let us know who you are. Your name will be added to our scroll of Londoners who have signed up to show their support. Please note: your name may be published on this website.

Typing the name and clicking on “pledge your support”, you can express your own belonging, and it is not by chance that the word used is so formal: to pledge. We have here again a sort of social contract: “to pledge the support” means to recognise themselves as a part of the community and to recognise the duties coming from this status and, among them, the duty of protection.

Launching this campaign the Mayor of London, the Greater London Authority and London Transport tried to cope with the risk of a big conflict in the city. In fact, the big issue after the attack was the risk of a conflict within the city, against Muslim communities and, in general, the risk of a wave of racism. The 7/7 attack could represent “a blow to the basic tissues of social life” damaging “the bonds attaching people together” and impairing the sense of communality” (Erikson 1976: 154). I am referring here to the concept of “collective trauma” when even if the individual, the “I”, “continues to exist, though damaged and permanently changed”, the “you” continues to exist “though distant and hard to relate to”, the “we” “no longer exists as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body” (ib.). The risk, in other words, was the disintegration of the Londoners’ community and the impossibility of living a peaceful life within the city.

1.3. Community, population and governamentality

What is at stake, here, is the construction of a collective entity, the community. But the semiotic and narrative status of this entity is quite ambiguous, in particular if we look at it from the TYS poster. Let us go back to it.

As I have just said, and you can see that everywhere, the poster shows a blue eye, a brown ear, and feminine red lips. The rhetorical device, the synecdoche, indicates that every organ of sense stands for a whole: in this case the blue eye connotes the general idea of a white person, the brown ear suggests the general idea of a black person, the red lips connote the general idea of a woman. Thus the poster allows different interpretative paths that stand for different identification paths: one can affiliate to the community as a whole (you as plural); one can affiliate to the community as individual (you as singular); one can mediate their belonging to the most inclusive London community through the belonging to other categories (gender, ethnicity, religion). So the poster offers a series of interpretative paths trying to include a series of possible philosophies of affiliation (communitarism, individualism, multiculturalism). The rhetoric of the community used in the TYS

poster is very similar to that used in the “We stand united with our customer” poster: there, both the text and the picture showed a part of the community, which stood for the entire community, a synecdoche again, working as an *exemplum*.

However I think that the semiotic status of this collective entity is more ambiguous than that. If we try to put the TYS poster in a more general security practice, the narrative status of the community doubles: the community through its members is the agent of the practice of surveillance, but this practice is implemented on the community itself. In other words, the community is at the same time the subject and the object of its doing:⁵ the community must be defended and defends *itself by itself*.

In this sense, the “7 MILLION LONDONERS” is both the community and the population. I am referring here to a possible comparison between Anderson’s (1991) and Foucault’s (2004) work.

Benedict Anderson, in his well-known work *Imagined Communities* explains how communities are constructed. A series of semiotic and cultural devices are used in this sense: the invention of the novel genre in literature and the invention of the Press (after Gutenberg), the birth of History and Geography as disciplines, timetables and museums, maps and census are among the knowledge and power devices that lay the foundation of modern national communities. Through these representations every member of the community could (and can) imagine their fellow-members even not knowing them, meeting them or hearing of them, and in everyone’s mind lives the image of the communion of a group of people sharing the same time and the same place.

This is the way the TYS poster works. The effect of truth is due to the use of a system of knowledge: the reference to the name of a territory (London), represented on a map (the underground map), on which 7 million people (the number of Londoners after the census) move sharing the same time (the time of the London Underground). This is the way even the “We stand united with our customer” poster worked: representing a group of people we will never know and meet, we are allowed to imagine the community that, generally, is made of that “type” of people.

However, more generally the TYS poster, as part of the practice of surveillance, represented the community not only as the subject but as the object of the same practice. In this respect Anderson’s research finds in Foucault’s research its counterpart. In *Security, Territory and Population*, Foucault explains that the birth of the state is linked to the birth of a series of technologies of power and knowledge. In particular, he says, the statistic, the knowledge of the State, helps in constructing a new collective entity: the population. This collective entity became the target of a new practice of

⁵ I use here a narrative approach after Greimas (1987) and Greimas and Courtès (1979).

government, replacing the pastoral power of Christianity. He called this type of political technology *governmentality*:

ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument (Foucault, 2004: 108).

The aim of governmentality practices is salvation: if salvation in Christianity was that of the soul from the power of evil, for the State salvation is worldly salvation and the preservation of the citizens' bodies. Comparing the devices of governmentality to the semiotic devices studied by Anderson in his work, we can see that they are the same to some extent: for Anderson and Foucault, the census as a way to represent a group of people belonging to a Nation and the representation of the territory where they live are crucial for imagining and representing a collective entity, which the first calls community and the second population.

We are looking at the same object but from two different points of view, depending one upon the other: for Anderson community is a subject, for Foucault it is an object; in the first case we look at the process of becoming subject, in the second case we look at the process of becoming subjected.

2.0. What is a suspicious behaviour? The *Trust your Instincts* campaign

The key term of the *Trust your Senses* campaign is the word "suspicious": what does it mean? The TYS poster does not provide any definition or representation of what suspicious behaviour is. The reader must fill this "blank space" of the text with shared common knowledge.

I will analyse here the *Trust your Instincts* campaign, whose texts, posters and radio announcement are available on the Metropolitan Police website. Through this campaign, the Metropolitan Police intends to provide instructions in order to recognise suspicious behaviour. I will focus my attention here on the radio script:

Radio script - Counter Terrorism campaign February 2007 'Sure'

Female Voice over:

How d'you tell the difference between someone just video-ing crowded place and someone who's checking it out for a terrorist attack?

How can you tell if someone's buying unusual quantities of stuff for a good reason or if they're planning to make a bomb?

What's the difference between someone just hanging around and someone behaving suspiciously?

How can you tell if they're a normal everyday person, or a terrorist?

Male voice over:

The answer is, you don't have to.

If you call the confidential Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321, the specialist officers you speak to will analyse the information. They'll decide if and how to follow it up.

You don't have to be sure. If you suspect it, report it.
Call the Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321 in confidence.

The woman wants to get some explanations about the difference, in general, between “a normal everyday person” and “a terrorist”. In other words, she wants to know how to recognise the threat just by looking at someone's behaviour: someone who is using a camera, who is buying “unusual” quantities of “stuff” or who is just walking. These types of behaviour could be seen either as “normal” or hiding a real intention: to plan a terrorist attack.

The policeman answers she does not need any explanation because she does not have to be sure. The concept of suspicion is empty and the text does not provide any instruction that might help people in recognising the enemies, in gaining an insight into them.⁶ The Enemy in the war on Terror is a very weird entity: there is no exterior or official mark (a uniform) as in a regular war and there is no “racial-racist” feature, on which ground we can trace *the difference*.

2.1. Managing the difference, managing the conflict

This type of security discourse is destined to fail: in order to protect the community from the enemy we must know who the enemy is and where the threat is lurking. The War on Terror is a war that does not follow this logic, and it is not only the case of the TYS and TYI campaigns: the state of exception and the prevention of war are two examples of the logic of protection from an Enemy that is not describable, from an event that is not predictable.

The case of London is even more problematic for the peculiarity of the city. Let us go back to the “We stand united with our customers” poster and the TYS campaign. We saw that in both representations the aim is to represent diversity and to allow people to find a place of identification. In the “We stand united with our customers” poster the employees are the representation of the heterogeneity of the people living in London. The TYS poster tries to represent potential and different receivers through the representation of the eye, the ear and the lips. The *One London* campaign slogan says: we are Londoners, we are one. The strategy represents briefly diversity, but, at the same time, from a semantic point of view, it neutralizes it: there are seven million of us, each of us is different but we are Londoners, we are one. As I said this strategy was used for avoiding conflict within the community, in particular, to manage the potential conflict between non-Muslim communities against Muslim ones.

⁶ I am using here the cognitive semiotics approach and the concept of Cognitive Type, Nuclear Type and the process of recognition. See Eco 1997.

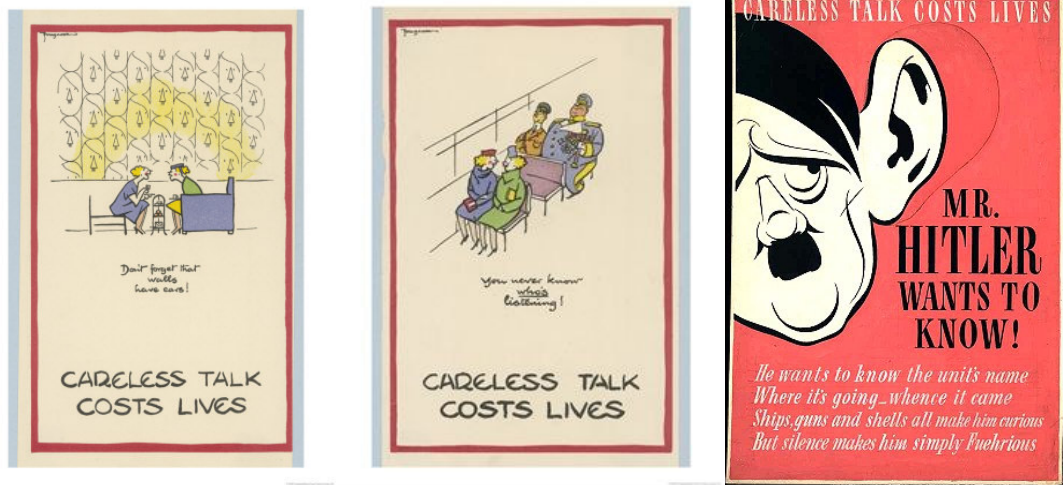
People coming from every country in the world live in London. In this respect, it can be said that even before so-called globalization, the British capital was a microworld within the world. As the Kureishi quotation I used at the beginning proves, this means that even the Londoner identity could be seen as a supranational identity, a sort of pot where everything could be put inside. That is why the *One London* campaign includes the pledge that would not be necessary if the Londoner identity were an identity coming from the blood of ancestors or assured by the land on which one was born.

But if the main feature of the Londoner identity is difference, we do not have any clues for tracing the difference within the Other, the one standing outside the Community. If, in the past, the struggle was against another nation, today the Enemy is “within our communities” as we are told by the Metropolitan Police on the official website. The difference is already inside, as the enemy looks like us and we look like it.

3.0. “We” is behaving suspiciously? Looking like the Enemy

In this aspect, we may find something unexpected and striking as we compare counterterrorism campaigns to security campaigns in the UK ,during the Second World War. We are used to think of the Enemy, the Enemy inside the Nation, like a spy or a fifthcolumnist. From the Conradian secret agent to Mata Hari, the image of the enemy brings institutions to spread the message: “Shut up, the enemy is listening”. And actually to us terrorists are invisible enemies, secret agents that spy on us.

But let us look at some of the posters used during the Second World War



These are three examples of the “Careless talk costs lives” series.⁷ The message spread is: the Enemy can be spying on you, listening to your talk, so shut up. Hitler is, of course, the representation of the Enemy *par excellence*. This type of poster was used extensively in many

⁷ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

countries, from Italy to Germany, from Russia to the USA, during the Second World War, to spread the same message: “Shut up, the enemy is listening”. In particular there is a strong link between the US and UK propaganda. For example here are some US posters used during the Second World War:



When we look at the TYS and at the TYI campaigns it is clear that the message is just the opposite: “Listen! The Enemy (maybe) talking”. If during the Second World War the main order spread by government through security campaigns is contained in the image of a finger put on the mouth for saying: “keep your mouth shut”, today the image is that of a man stretching out his ear, trying to listen to the potential threatening talk. The gesture of stretching out the ear is today the gesture of the good citizen and not of the enemy, as in the US and the UK campaigns used to represent them during the Second World War.⁸ Or, even better, it is the gesture of both of them. Lips are now free and are called to tell.

In this campaign, the secret agent, who spies something or on someone else, is now not only the enemy anymore but also the citizen itself. Carl Schmitt in *Theory of the Partisan*, summarised this strategy quoting Napoleon: “one must operate as a partisan wherever there are partisans” (1963, Introduction § 2). And here the strategy is more or less the same: the citizen must take on the strategy that is supposed to be the enemy’s strategy.

Eventually in the last Metropolitan Police poster (for the 2008 security campaign), we can read: “terrorists use surveillance to help plan attacks, taking photos and making notes about security measures, like the location of the CCCTV cameras. If you see someone doing that we need to

⁸ In any case, as far as I know, there is a poster spreading at the same time the message: “Shut up the enemy is listening. Listen the enemy may be talking”, used in the US during the Second World War. It is visible at the URL (<http://history1900s.about.com/library/photos/blywwiip133.htm>).

know”.⁹ Again we can summarize the message in this way: terrorists use surveillance, you have to do it as well but against them.

If the suspicious behaviour is that of someone spying on something or someone else, then, the member of the community is called to act exactly the same way.

4.0. Conclusion

The final purpose of the TYS and TYI campaign is to integrate technological surveillance implemented through the CCCTV cameras with social surveillance, implemented by citizens. The TYS poster and the *One London Campaign* represent the member of the community called to implement this practice of surveillance. The TYI campaign should provide a description of enemies and of the threat that must be recognised and told to the authority.

The security campaigns have, in my view, the role of *phármakon* for the social body: they work as inoculation, at the imaginary level, of the enemy and of the event that have to be recognised in order to be avoided or controlled.¹⁰ The vaccine is the inoculation of the individual with foreign bodies (antigens), dead or weakened in order to produce antibodies, cells that recognise the alien. In our case the security campaigns try to transform the community subject into an immunity subject. In order to produce this subject they must provide a content or describe a probable event, which may occur in the future, for allowing recognition.¹¹ And the identity is created by a *no*: “We are not them, we don’t want that”. Through this process we draw a border, and this border is “our identity and integrity” that must be defended.

⁹ http://www.met.police.uk/campaigns/campaign_ct_2008.htm

¹⁰ See also in this perspective the London prepared programme (<http://www.londonprepared.gov.uk/londonplans/>).

¹¹ See also the concept of pre-mediation by Richard Grusin (2004).

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