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Technology and Communicative Action Theory – Paths to an Effective Democracy

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Abstract

This article´s main objective is to analyse the utilization of technology as an instrument for the democracy implementation and its improvement, by applying Jurgen Haberma´s communicative theory. Firstly, we analyse general aspects of the requirements of contemporary democracy – main characteristics, definitions - and the potential of technology to spread and develop it, bringing examples of practices that have been made through the world. Then, we focus our study on how communicative theory can enhance democracy using technology as a tool in this direction. We start it by presenting the conceptions and ideas developed by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas related to the mentioned theory, how it empowers citizens, develops a legitimate law, enhances democracy and so on. Finally, the studies are focused on how his theory can be used together with technology to an effective democracy.

Keywords: Communicative action theory – technology - democracy

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1. The requirement of legitimacy in contemporary democracies

The validity of the right can only be explained by a "simultaneous reference to its phatic or social validity (*Geltung*) and its validity or legitimacy (*Gültigkeit*)" - the first one can be checked by the degree to which it can be imposed, whereas the second, its discursive claim provides the normative validity (Habermas, 2003). Through a practice of self-determination, by which citizens exercise their freedoms in a communicative way, the law draws its integrative power, and also the necessary sources of social solidarity (Habermas, 2003).

Agreements made through dialectical speech legitimatizes institutions and political principles. It´s also important to observe that from the point of view of the process, deliberative democracy is legitimate because it solves the problem of justice at the individual level, transcending the citizens without violating their autonomy (Simone Chamber, 1996).

The political participation and the role of agents indiscriminately spread among all citizens, allowing the development of a legal framework of a democratic state is legitimate and presupposes a dialectical process in which the communicative action plays an important role (Habermas, 2003).

The political questions raised to allow the regulation of behaviors that are directed towards collective purposes, due to the influence of the law, which allows the extension of the nodal arguments for "political education of the will" (Habermas, 2003).

The legitimacy of political institutions is an essential foundation. Therefore some kind of consent of all of those who are subject to that it is another important element to be present in a democratic state. In fact, it has been already consolidated a long tradition comprising institutional legitimacy and political justice in terms of consent, established by the social contract theory (Rosenfeld, 2001).

The legitimacy, on the other hand, is related to the issue of internal sovereignty of the state and, as pointed out by Morton Fried (1976, p. 232-233), ideology is an essential factor. The author observes that the maintenance of internal sovereignty of the state is one of the most fascinating questions about the political organization, but it is linked to the legitimacy that requires more than "hard power".

The rule of law demands the organization of public authority constituted according to the precepts of the law, but this will only be legitimate when the law is legitimately established, so that, in Public Administration, the democratic characteristic should be able to regenerate itself at every step through a communicative power (Habermas, 2003).

Not surprisingly, the concept of Modern law absorbs the democratic thinking, developed by Kant and Rousseau, by which the legitimacy of a legal order "built with subjective rights can only be redeemed through the power of socially integrative 'united will of all and coincident 'free and equal citizens" (Habermas, 2003).

Habermas observes (2003) that social integration, which is done through the norms, values and understanding, just happens to be entirely a task of communicatively acting to the extent that norms and values are communicatively diluted and exposed to the free game of mobilizing arguments, and to the extent that we take into account the categorical difference between acceptability and simple acceptance.

Habermas (2003) notes that the risk of dissent will always be present, but reason leads to the need to conclude an agreement, in which there is the ability to say 'no', occurring an advantageous "stabilization nonviolent behavior expectations." So it is the presence of communicative action in the backdrop of the debate, the commensalisms that add resistance to the pressures arising from the clash between facticity and validity, since the idealization finds no more oxygen to survive: the real dimension prevails in accordance that took place.

The complexity of society has elements themselves, as the pluralization of life forms and the individualization of life stories that refract overlays beliefs that are the foundation of the world of life, for example. In this sense, the latter is diluted, acquiring a degree of validity differentiated within a tradition diluted communicatively (Habermas, 2003).

It occurs that the normative act always assumed one guided by interests, while in complex societies today we have an increasing segmentation of the background, the elements of unity between them and within them. Thus, for Habermas (2003), there is no possibility of stabilizing complexity through an interaction led by the success of actors, but the integration may be accomplished through the communicative action.

Habermas (2003) believes that the strategic interactions in the world of life may occur. However, they are tools for the production of an instrumental order. Then, strategic interactions have their place in a world of life as pre-made elsewhere. Still, the strategically acting keeps the world of life as a backdrop, but it neutralizes its function in coordinating action. It no longer provides a consensus advance, because the strategically acting person sees institutional data and other participants in the interaction just as social facts.

Habermas (2003) indicates, soon after, that "there seems to be an exit through regulation rules of strategic interactions, on which the actors themselves understand." Thus, if there is an orientation for success, there should be factual boundaries that allow the modification of the agent choices, so that it is forced to adapt their behavior, following the guideline of standards enabling social force integration.

2. The Technology use for democracy

The growing presence of dynamic and dialogical nature of relationships represents a way to "fight against old and new inequalities and Information and Communication Technologies can establish itself as a valuable ally in this task" (Ramon Flecha, 2009).

Flecha (2009) responds to the observation that "the Internet does not eat" with the observation that the absence of an economy based on valences raised by the Internet also cannot eat. So, therefore, if the industrial society has the material resources that constitute the basis of production processes, to the point of enabling and promoting social inclusion of people in society is the same does not occur, since the resources loom large in importance intellectuals.

The belief that technology will enable a more egalitarian society, however, disregards the educational inequalities which leave people, which sets the context of this inequality in the information society (Flecha, 2009).

There is, thus, social fragmentation, by the characterization of the "digital divide". It is due to the rapid introduction of information resources in society, without the realization that the overwhelming majority do not even had access to these resources. It results in sectors or countries with more resources, able to follow the evolution of the information society and excluded, in flagrant difficulty of "access to ICT, but especially hobbled by blatant educational inequalities they made it extremely difficult to acquire the skills and understanding use" of the latest information resources (Flecha, 2009).

Access to the so-called "global village of information" requires training not only cultural, but also economic and discursive empowerment, which shows the fallacy of the eradication of borders in the global village (Panayota Gounari, 2009).

E-learning, for instance, is considered a way out from many segregations that we have in contemporary education. It allows flexibility in teaching and low cost education. Techonology also allows people to tear down the walls among Government, citizens and the private sector, as companies and NGOs (Eggers, 2007).

The virtual space becomes in ascending the natural habitat of humans, in a globalized world, consisting of networks, profitability and extraterritoriality. In this context, it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of change in communication and human relationships, especially because of the existence of interpretive communities that produce meanings as well as interpret objects that cannot be specified in advance, which cannot be classified as passive consumers but active participants in the process of creating new meanings (Gounari, 2009).

On the other hand, the boundaries erected by access structures constitute and shape the way in which knowledge is constructed, as well as interpret and reinterpret "the representations of the transcendent forms in language use and how to produce new discourses and discursive practices at the crossroads of a new information age" (Gounari, 2009, p. 22). This is how, in a virtual space heavily politicized and ideological individuals modify the meanings, forms of knowledge and varied identities are socialized into new communities of discursive and material nature, who forge certain stories, ideologies and knowledge (Gounari, 2009).

The language thus achieves a new turn, to break with the traditional confinement of communicative action as it unfolds as a "means of making

sense of the world that belongs to us, and as the core of human identity", revealing records and modes expression unpublished in the virtual world, arising from the experiences of local and negotiation of identities sectored (Gounari, 2009).

There is, according to the multitude of problems resulting from exclusion and under the pressure exerted by the excluded countries and egalitarian social movements, there is a need to build a more inclusive society model (Flecha, 2009). The solution is connectivity, access, because, despite of the issues involving the "digital divide", the demands pertaining to accessibility problems to result in the entry of people in the global village, erecting a society in the blatant lack of material for those who not actualize its insertion, the point is already speaking proletariat global information and "netcitizens" - the latter designation given to literacy, to the detriment of the "underclass unbound" (Gounari, 2009).

Thus, this fact reduces the resistance of the privileged sectors regarding the democratization of access to ICT, so that governments and international organizations initiate a movement to take up some of the claims of social movements struggling to overcome exclusion, especially by developing an agenda for access (Flecha, 2009).

It should be noted, moreover, that the ancient sites of power, commonly characterized by taxing our times are replaced by negotiation, in which today calls itself Revolution dialogic society. So it is because contemporary societies are characterized by dialogue as an integral element in all walks of life, in all spheres of daily life policies, especially to cope with the multitude of questions that they strip society of uncertainty. This occurred in the twentieth century, when most authoritarian regimes disappeared in favor of representative democracies closer to the demands of citizenship. The example in this respect is the participatory experience of Porto Alegre, where citizens can participate in the decision on the allocation of public resources, ie, in budget management, in full exercise of deliberative democracy (Flecha, 2009).

It is crucial, therefore, to note that "the nature of ICT is not evil, nor transformative, neither negative nor positive, but essentially dependent on the use we make of them," so that critical reflection on its use becomes essential, especially regarding educational pathways that enable its decolonization, that through access, training is performed critical analysis of all to participate in the network and make decisions according to their intentions (Flecha, 2009).

The discourses that produce concerns develop connections between private and public in nature, but training for a critical approach, which involves a perspective of action and intervention, which must go beyond speech and textual (Gounari, 2009), so that:

> *One of the important tasks will then locate these spheres of action, virtual and real, where we try to educational interventions, subversions, and, ultimately, change.*

A critical approach, in turn, to involve the study of the individual, isolated at home, that theoretically would be more interconnected than ever, as a monad, but on the other hand, it remains to inquire who this person is. This is a question that will involve the possibilities and limitations of cyberdemocracy, especially considering the context in which it is inserted, permeated by consumerism, technohype (Gounari, 2009).

Thus, we must seize the historical moment in order to effect a social-political action for the recovery of public spaces, as well as to cope with the "anti-politics of fear by the radicalization of the democratic process", so that an effectively belonging to the collective power can be assumed and enhanced, where people, rejecting the manufacture of consensus by "pedagogical structures that produce individuals with conviction, with an ethical position, with the courage to speak and face the power and transforming wishes" (Flecha, 2009) .

The debate about overcoming the divide between those who have access to those who have not, the issue involves the development of public opinion and the development of their agendas: the first related to the issue of access to the technologies available, such as instruments, which encompasses the material issue, the second turn, refers to the access code, ie "cultural capital and speeches needed to negotiate both the meaning and content of the agenda of access" (Gounari, 2009).

3. Digital public spheres

The bourgeois public sphere may be preliminarily understood as a sphere in which private individuals can collectively sue the public sphere regulated by the authority, but in the face of his own authority, that we may discuss this with the "general laws of the exchange in the sphere essentially private but publicly relevant laws of the exchange of goods and social work "(Habermas, 2003).

As regards the development of the public sphere, this came in the early stages of capitalism in the seventeenth century, initially representing the ideological spaces and materials developed by the bourgeoisie in order to interpret, rationalize, and mediate, through a rational discourse, cultural issues every day, as well as relating to politics and the state. If it is considered in its ideal aspect, highlights the need for ideological and cultural conditions necessary for active citizenship, which requires enlightened and skilled citizens to rationalize the power through the medium of public discussion, free of any kind of domination. In his critical sense, questions the existence of a gap between the promise and reality of the existence of liberal public spheres (Giroux, 2001). Giroux (2001, p. 236) notes that:

> *In one sense, the concept of the public sphere reveals the degree to which culture has become a commodity to be consumed and*

produced as part of the logic of reification rather than in the interest of enlightenment and self-determination.

In real life, we observe the disappearance of the public sphere, but the emergence of cyberspace as an alternate sphere can be interpreted in the light of the disappearance of the public, as well as the de-politicization of public discourse and the language used to refer to matters of polis, which evolves into a pragmatic approach, involving just what is concrete - a language therefore dissociated from its historicity and transcendence. Hence the need to redesign the language that should be translated, in historical and political ways, in order to transcend the political crisis, the breakdown of social and civic engagement, and alienation from society and the political system (Gounari, 2009).

The "public" space in the virtual world, in fact, is woven by private appointments that meet the needs of a virtual market that develops stateless organizations. There is thus a "new public sphere", where participatory democracy can be realized, especially in a WEB marketed, in which democracy does not need a real public space to be effective (Gounari, 2009).
It is argued that the speed and low cost access to information provided on the Internet can promote citizenship in the same way that stands out that this would cause the union of individuals, overcoming geographical barriers and other limitations. We also observe that virtual discussions could either dissipate or even increase economic inequalities, while checks for utopian visions about the promise of the internet as a public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002).

The challenge of selecting the output published on the Web and a critical reading can be made possible by increasing the speeches that oppose all forms of oppression, since, despite of the oppressed often do not recognize this condition, the diffusion of discourses release may enable reformatting of thought, in that oppression becomes an object to be known, seized and transcended. In this sense, technology can facilitate the development of such spaces in which alternative discourses can spread, contributed as one of its challenges to the revival of active participation in politics, for emptying the culture of apathy and performance. Thus, those who are in the condition of subordinates will have the real opportunity to transcend their position reified to become subjects of their own history (Gounari, 2009).

In the digital age, there is a possibility of reduced demand for a public sphere worn or misused by private interests, which cannot be contextualized in time and space, due to the changing reality. In the digital public sphere, advances in communication technology enables the creation of a low-cost platform that enables the collection and dissemination of opinions by various observers varied training, which enables a critical discussion of the general welfare, among other possibilities (Jamie Anderson (?)).

The participation of citizens traditionally focuses on deliberation, but, considering the information deficit, there is the possibility to enhance at least a collaborative system, which would replace the outdated theory of governmental technical expertise (Beth Noveck, 2009).

The research on the possibility of digital media in the broad sense, and the internet in a particular sense, could implement deliberative democracy, is focused mainly analyzes the extent and quality of rational deliberation in online communication in digital spaces as well as the identification of elements that may act as facilitators or harmful to the resolution, so it can be extended to all (Lincoln Dahlberg, 2011).

Should democracy be extended to technically mediated areas of social life, despite of all the difficulties, would we have the exclusion of democracy? Andrew Feenberg (1992) asks this question and answers it with his certainty in the use of technology to block the spread of democracy, because technology can embrace more than one sort of technological civilization.

On the other hand, there is a politicization of science and the democratic challenge in the future of science polity making will be related to the necessity of a citizen effective participation in the policy-making process allowing new institutional and procedures to be developed. Another democratic challenge is to make sure that the politicization of science can be used for the development of a constructive and reasonable social consensus related to the ends and the elected main goals of technology development and the application of all scientific knowledge. Such design cannot be enhanced without clarity, rigor and creative democratic fundaments argued by citizens (Bruce Jennings, 1986).

Nevertheless, it an unresolved dilemma. There are still many challenges, institutional reforms, changes that are necessary. Nevertheless, there are some ways through which we can get closer to a more democratic system, and they necessarily evolve: the participation of people in the task of governing science and technology; the diverse interests should be deeply analysed in policy making early and often – voting in election times or leaving such issues to the so-called experts do not help democracy at all, neither science; a "balanced" mechanism of governance, in which central coordination is combined with decentralized, so that "communitarian institutions accessible to all and designed to encourage public discourse on both national and local issues"; the service of humanity should be prioritized by science and technology, and how this will work with the economic needs, or democracy, is something to be object of debate (Malcom Goggin, 1986).

Research suggests that the "ideal deliberation" can be approximated spaces of virtual interaction, aiming to develop a rational debate through participation rules, restraint systems and interaction. However, the research was largely based on specific cases of virtual deliberation, so that the question remains as to what extent can give rational deliberation in an online debate, especially in systems "digital communication increasingly colonized by the state and corporate interests that deliberative theorists see as a significant threat to democratic communication to require regulation "(Dahlberg, 2011).

It is found that there are a number of possibilities that are currently implemented in a democratic practice and digital rhetoric, indicating that there is potential to go beyond individualistic forms and liberal slant that prevails in political practice. Not enough, it was found in relation to digital democracy, it

is necessary to focus on the democratic order, rather than there being a concern with the procedural aspects. A third aspect is that the data collected in such experiments allow major progress in research in order to verify different approaches not only democracy, but also to deepen the observations about the practices of rhetoric, as well as evaluations of sociological positions. A final note can be made regarding the extent of critical focus, so you can be an assessment of the normative justification of the democratic value of each position (Dahlberg, 2011).

In fact, one of the most crucial issues to be addressed relates to the ability of the internet to enable human communication accurately and therefore their community, despite the absence of personal contact, which could undermine the very commitment to the community (Andrew Feenberg, 2009, p. second).

The understanding of this new form of public life involves the comprehension of technology. The policy is usually related to geographical boundaries, under the assumption that those who live there share common interests and meet to discuss them. Of course, there is the possibility of disagreements, but it is inherent to communication the happening of conflicts. If they are resolved in a legitimate manner, as through voting, it is positive to democracy (Feenberg, 2009, p. 5).

In a more advanced stage of technological development, however, this narrow interpretation of the policy from the pre-industrial society is harmed. Aspects of social lives are conditioned by common conveniences that are shared among people who share a significant variety of technical systems that draw large part of social life. Technologically advanced societies involve people in a variety of digital networks that define careers, education, leisure, healthcare, communications, and human environments. Such networks involve geographic communities and compete with them in designing people's lives, after all, the integration of this network requires specific interests arising out of participation in the existing opportunities. The interests of the participants can be well represented, or not, depending on the organization of the network, the possibilities it offers to its members to recognize their shared assets, and the body of knowledge that drives (Feenberg, 2009).

Digital communities now use the internet to organize their interests for greater representation and, despite setbacks in other sectors, the action in the digital sphere is growing, in large part because of the ease communication that exists for the organization of groups. The new forms of politics developed online cannot replace those traditional representative institutions, founded on the geographical aspect, but the activity in the public sphere can now proceed and add digital issues previously considered neutral and delivered with expertise, to solve without consultation. This new conformation allowed the creation of a social and digital environment in which the action in traditional politics means no longer passive induction, for a regular media accessibility (Feenberg, 2009).

The survey indicates that the policy is no longer exclusive to the traditional groups, debating traditional issues. The diversity of issues and

discussion groups are increasing and it is unpredictable: the Internet is far from being bounded as well as its affects on politics and democracy, but it is certain that new approaches are needed, in a scenario of technological changes that redraw our experience as individuals and society (Feenberg, 2009).

Conclusion

The practice of self-determination, in a democracy allows the development of a communicative way and an integrative power, that builds the sources of social solidarity. The agreements made through dialectical speech can legitimize institutions and political principles, especially the law.

The legitimacy of political institutions is an essential foundation for any democratic state in the XXI Century. It is much more than the use of the "hard power", because the rule of law demands that the public authority must be constituted according to the percepts of the law, but it must be a law that was legitimately elaborated.

Strategic interactions in life and in the communication process happen, but there is the need of development of rules to avoid that such production of the instrumental order, especially the ones that can prevail and undermine social interests.

Therefore, the definition of which is or which are the main public interests must be discovered in a public communicative process, where a strategic action can be at least partially neutralized. The creation of such a process requires some of democratic elements such as the respect for diversity, differences, inclusive practices, equal treatment, and the growth of the capacity to deal with the digital world and its technologies – especially the ones related to communication.

In such environment, with designed boundaries to non-democratic behavior, or actions that are directed to private interests, for instance, away from public interests, must be prohibited, so that a fair communication is encouraged for the benefit of social integration.

In a digital era, the access to the "global village of information" demands not only cultural, economic and discursive possibilities of every citizen, but also a true commitment to the establishment of a true democracy, which requires the possibility of e-learning, for instance, since it is a consistent path to leave information and cultural segregation that we face in contemporary societies.

The virtual space becomes nowadays a sort of natural habitat of humans, in this globalized world, formed of networks that outperform geographical, personal, cultural and economic boundaries. It certainly allows a more inclusive society model. Therefore, to take hold of the historical moment is crucial to the creation of a significant social-political action and effective for the recovery of public spheres, as well as to dilute any fear of an eventual radicalization of the democratic process.

The alleged disappearance of the public sphere can be mitigated by the emergence of cyberspace as an alternate sphere, where a new politicization of public discourse and language can be created, to overlap the political apathy.

There is surely the use of technology to block the spread of democracy, which makes clear the importance of the perception of the politicization of science and the democratic challenge before all, regarding the necessity of a citizen effective participation in the policy-making process, and the use of technological development towards social interests, through a social consensus.

There are various possibilities that are being implemented to the benefit of democracy in terms of the use of technology, allowing some favorable partial conclusions: more than concentrating only in democratic procedural aspects, it is important to focus on the democratic order itself, and also that are available different approaches that can make democracy more and more effective and not only a distant objective.

If the new forms of politics that are developed through the use of technology cannot replace the traditional representative institutions, it is possible not only that new mechanisms and institutions are created, people start dialogues and organize political action, but also they become more integrated to the usual institutions in a more participative way.

Despite digital public spheres digital apparently are being referred tangentially in Habermas' writings, they are still covered, so that he admits the need for regulation of the media in order to ensure its allocation to the interests of the collectivity.

The studies performed with the use of the parameters established by Jurgen Habermas, for the development of a deliberative democracy indicate the possibility of using the internet, through websites and programs in order to accomplish a greater participation of people in the public sphere, resulting in social improvements.

It is in this context that studies related to the use of technology should be developed, without minimizing the complexity surrounding the issue, in a society full of inequalities, omissions and deficiencies, with no claim to unique answers, but open and inclusive, in order to develop a democratic and fraternal.

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