

JOÃO CARLOS CORREIA (ORG.)  
ROUSILEY C. MAIA (ORG.)  
THEODORE GLASSER  
RAPHAEL KIES  
JOSÉ RICARDO CARVALHEIRO  
IÑAKI GARCIA BLANCO  
TITO CARDOSO E CUNHA  
JOAQUIM PAULO SERRA  
PAUL STATHAM  
HANS JORG TRENZ  
CLAÚDIA ÁLVARES  
ANTÔNIO FIDALGO  
CAMILO AGGIO  
FRANCISCO PAULO JAMIL ALMEIDA MARQUES  
RAFAEL CARDOSO SAMPAIO  
CATHERINE FLEMING BRUCE  
MARION DALIBERT  
MICHELINE FRENETTE  
MARIE-FRANCE VERMETTE  
ANTHEA GARMAN  
MANUELA GRÜNANGERL  
ILONA BIERNACKA-LIGIEZA  
HANNAH MIDDENDORF  
MIGUEL MIDÕES  
EDNA MIOLA  
RICARDO MORAIS  
PASCAL MWALE  
RUI ALEXANDRE NOVAIS  
VIVIANE ARAÚJO  
JERNEJ PRODNİK  
SAMUEL ANDERSON ROCHA BARROS  
ELSA COSTA SILVA  
ANCUTA-GABRIELA TARTA  
SAMUEL MATEUS

LIVROS LABCOM  
LABCOM BOOKS

# THEORIES AND PRACTICES PUBLIC SPHERE RECONSIDERED

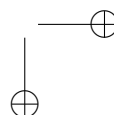
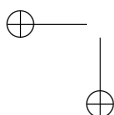




João Carlos Correia e Rousiley C. Maia (Orgs.)

# Public Sphere Reconsidered Theories and Practices

LabCom Books 2011



Livros LabCom  
www.livroslabcom.ubi.pt  
Direcção Livros LabCom: António Fidalgo  
Coordenação Científica do Projecto Agenda do Cidadão: João Carlos Correia  
Design da Capa: João Nuno Sardinha  
Paginação: João Nuno Sardinha  
Portugal, Covilhã, UBI, LabCom, Livros LabCom, 2011

ISBN: 978-989-654-082-1

Este volume resulta da compilação das comunicações apresentadas nas Conferências Internacionais Public Sphere Reconsidered: Theories and Practices, que se realizaram nos dias 19 e 20 de Maio de 2005 na Universidade da Beira Interior, no âmbito do Projeto Agenda dos Cidadãos - Jornalismo e Participação Cívica nos Media Portugueses e com os apoios da FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior, Projeto Comunicação e Deliberação / FCT - CAPES, SOPCOM - Sociedade Portuguesa de Ciências da Comunicação, ECREA - Communication and Democracy Section, Universidade da Beira Interior / Faculdade de Artes e Letras e LabCom - Online Communication Lab.

 **AGENDADOSCIDADÃOS**  
JORNALISMO E PARTICIPAÇÃO CÍVICA NOS *MEDIA* PORTUGUESES

**LabCom**  
online communication lab

**ECREA**  
COMMUNICATION AND  
DEMOCRACY SECTION

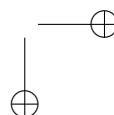
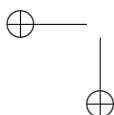
**PROJECT COMMUNICATION  
AND DELIBERATION**  
FCT - CAPES

**SOPCOM**  
SOCIEDADE  
PORTUGUESA  
DE CIÊNCIAS DA  
COMUNICAÇÃO

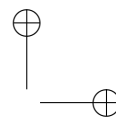
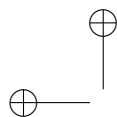


# Índice

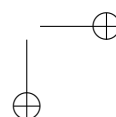
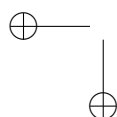
<b>Forward</b> <i>por</i> João Carlos Correia	<b>1</b>
<b>Campanhas Online, Participação Política e Esfera Pública: O Caso do Plano de Governo Colaborativo nas Eleições Brasileiras de 2010.</b> <i>por</i> Camilo Aggio, Jamil Marques, Rafael Sampaio	<b>3</b>
<b>The globalization-friendly global public sphere: contrasting paths to moral legitimacy and accountability.</b> <i>por</i> Catherine Fleming Bruce	<b>23</b>
<b>The Meanings of Public Sphere: is there any democratic role for Internet?</b> <i>por</i> João Carlos Correia	<b>37</b>
<b>Access to the Public Sphere and the Identity of the Subject of the French Nation.</b> <i>por</i> Marion Dalibert	<b>51</b>
<b>Conectados e tutelados.</b> <b>Uma revisitação tecnológica da esfera pública.</b> <i>por</i> António Fidalgo	<b>65</b>
<b>Young adults' involvement in the public sphere: A comparative international study.</b> <i>por</i> Micheline Frenette, Marie-France Vermette	<b>73</b>
<b>Speaking Poetry to Power.</b> <i>por</i> Anthea Garman	<b>91</b>

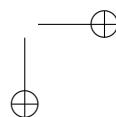
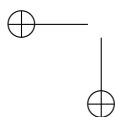
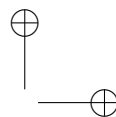
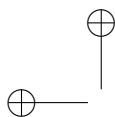


<b>Community media and public accountability.</b> <i>por</i> Manuela Grünangerl	<b>107</b>
<b>ICT and local public sphere in Poland and Norway.</b> <i>por</i> Iłona Biernacka-Ligieza	<b>119</b>
<b>Expanding the mass media role for the functioning of the political public sphere.</b> <i>por</i> Rousiley C. M. Maia	<b>143</b>
<b>The Principle of Publicity.</b> A socio-anthropological perspective <i>por</i> Samuel Mateus	<b>155</b>
<b>Between EUphoria and EU-phobia: The European elections 2009 in British and German quality newspapers.</b> <i>por</i> Hannah Middendorf	<b>169</b>
<b>Opinião Pública, média e líderes de opinião: um estudo exploratório sobre a influência dos média e dos líderes de opinião na formação da Opinião Pública.</b> <i>por</i> Miguel Midões	<b>189</b>
<b>Radiodifusão, Jornalismo e Esfera Pública.</b> O debate em torno da criação da Empresa Brasil de Comunicação na imprensa <i>por</i> Edna Miola	<b>201</b>
<b>New Technologies and Deliberation:</b> Internet as a virtual public sphere or a democratic utopia? <i>por</i> Ricardo Morais	<b>217</b>
<b>Babelisation of mediated debate, public deliberation through the press and emerging democracies of Southern Africa: the case of Zambia.</b> <i>por</i> Pascal Mwale	<b>231</b>
<b>Visibilidade em detrimento da interactividade. O Twitter nas recentes eleições presidenciais de Portugal e do Brasil.</b> <i>por</i> Rui Alexandre Novais, Viviane Araújo	<b>255</b>
<b>A public sphere without public(s)? Publics and counterpublics in post-</b>	

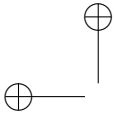


<b>Fordist capitalism.</b> <i>por Jernej Prodnik</i>	<b>273</b>
<b>Deliberação na esfera pública em tempos de comunicação e sociedade de massa. Possibilidades de integração entre deliberações ampliadas e deliberações restritas.</b> <i>por Rafael Sampaio, Samuel A. Rocha Barros</i>	<b>289</b>
<b>Blogosfera como esfera pública alternativa?</b> <i>por Elsa Costa e Silva</i>	<b>301</b>
<b>Just “Like” it and “Join”. Facebook and the European cultural public sphere.</b> <i>por Ancuta-Gabriela Tarta</i>	<b>313</b>









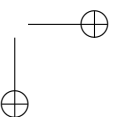
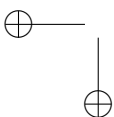
## Forward

João Carlos Correia

After the books of Hannah Arendt (*The Human Condition*, 1958) and Jurgen Habermas (*Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962) the concept of public sphere has undergone enormous changes and critical evaluations. The International Conference Public Sphere Reconsidered, organized in May 19 and 20 by the Faculty of Arts and Letters from University of Beira Interior, Citizens Agenda Project and Communication and Deliberation Project, with the support from Communication and Democracy Section of European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and the Political Communication and Rhetoric Working Groups from SOPCOM, tried to answer some recurring issues in this debate. Among these were the following:

- a) How can we assess today, in the normative and heuristic plans, the strength of the ideal that aims to establish a rational and egalitarian public sphere, supported in an enlightened public opinion?
- b) What is the impact of media in the conceptualization of this public sphere?
- c) Should we consider only the existence of a single national public sphere or the existence of multiple public spheres?
- d) Are public journalism, civic journalism, citizen journalism and blogs helping to legitimize a discourse of revitalization of public sphere?
- e) Which are the limits and possibilities of new technologies to invigorate the public sphere?
- f) What's the importance of rhetoric in contemporary public sphere?
- g) The so-called democratic deficit of the European Union, heralded by some authors, became a topic of major relevance. At a time when the decision-making power is transferred from national bodies elected directly by citizens to transnational instances, what does mean to search for a European Public Sphere?
- h) In face of the fragmentation of contemporary societies, with multiplication of claims for recognition presented by multifarious identities, may we still speak about an unitarian concept of public sphere?

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 1-2





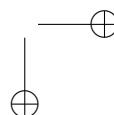
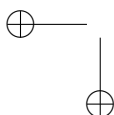
To answer to these and to many other issues, about fifty researchers from different parts of the world (South Africa, Germany, Brazil, Canada, Spain, United States, Italy, Hungary, Portugal and Romania) joined the University of Beira Interior, in Covilhã, in a small mountain city, to discuss it during two intellectually exciting and productive days. The result is partially represented in this book, the result of the work undertaken by those researchers.

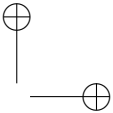
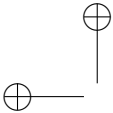
In addition to the focus provided by Communication Sciences, the event had a trans-disciplinary nature with contributions from Philosophy, Political Science, Mass Communication Research, and Political Sociology.

We hope that the proceedings of the conference now published will contribute to a better understanding of these difficult times in which the democratic debate is more than ever, a strong demand.

**Covilhã, UBI, November 1, 2011**

*João Carlos Correia*





## Campanhas Online, Participação Política e Esfera Pública: O Caso do Plano de Governo Colaborativo nas Eleições Brasileiras de 2010.

Camilo Aggio\*  
Francisco Paulo Jamil Almeida Marques†  
Rafael Cardoso Sampaio‡

### Resumo

Este artigo examina as discussões online realizadas nos fóruns do “Proposta Serra”. Tal iniciativa digital foi mantida pela campanha do candidato José Serra (PSDB) durante as eleições presidenciais brasileiras de 2010 e era dedicada, primariamente, a elaboração de um plano de governo colaborativo entre cidadãos e agentes da campanha do candidato. No website, os participantes poderiam montar seus perfis, estabelecer contatos e criar fóruns temáticos que endereçavam diversas temáticas, como agricultura, educação, infra-estrutura e habitação. De tal forma, buscando-se avaliar a qualidade de tais trocas argumentativas, esse artigo propõe uma análise de conteúdo da deliberatividade das mensagens do fórum (N=200), considerando 5 indicadores inspirados nos estudos de deliberação online, a saber: Reciprocidade, Reflexividade, Respeito, Justificação e Informação. Os resultados apontam altos valores de deliberatividade, o que evidencia que as trocas discursivas foram, de maneira geral, qualificadas e que o espaço cumpriu bem sua função de permitir maior reflexão e diálogo entre os eleitores. Todavia, a análise também demonstra que a iniciativa foi incapaz de ser transparente em seus critérios de seleção das melhores propostas, diminuindo consideravelmente o senso de eficácia política dos cidadãos colaboradores.

---

\*Doutorando do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação e Cultura Contemporâneas (UFBA). E-mail: [camiloaggio@gmail.com](mailto:camiloaggio@gmail.com).

†Doutor em Comunicação e Cultura Contemporâneas (UFBA). Professor da Universidade Federal do Ceará, Brasil. O autor agradece à Capes e ao CNPq pelo apoio financeiro à execução da pesquisa (Edital 002/2010). E-mail: [marquesjamil@yahoo.com.br](mailto:marquesjamil@yahoo.com.br).

‡Doutorando em Comunicação e Política, membro do Centro de Estudos Avançados em Democracia Digital (UFBA) e bolsista CNPq. E-mail: [cardososampaio@yahoo.com.br](mailto:cardososampaio@yahoo.com.br).

## Abstract

This paper aims at examining the online political discussions which took place on the website “Proposta Serra”, an open government plan initiative launched by the Brazilian Social Democracy Party’s candidate José Serra during the 2010 Brazilian presidential elections. The Proposta Serra’s purpose was to engage voters and campaigning agents in political discussions in order to create a collaborative government plan. The project’s website reproduces some of the features of social network sites, such as public or semi-public profiles, photo albums and blogs. The Proposta Serra’s singular characteristic was to give voters the opportunity to create thematic online forums turned to debate issues such as agriculture, housing, urban and rural public infra-structure and education. Through content analysis, we evaluated the deliberative quality of (N=200) messages exchanged by the participants in 4 different forums. Five analytical categories taken from the current online deliberation literature were used: Reciprocity, Reflexivity, Respect, Justification and Information. The results show high ratings of deliberation in the political discussions, demonstrating the forums’ usefulness to promote qualified cognitive exchanges. However, the lack of transparency in the selection process of voters’ suggestions decreased significantly the user’s sense of political efficacy.

## Internet, eleições e participação: notas introdutórias

O debate em torno da participação política enquanto valor fundamental a compor o conjunto de práticas que caracterizam as democracias contemporâneas – uma discussão que, nomeadamente, refere-se à maior legitimação dos processos de produção da decisão política - ocupa um papel de destaque no campo de pesquisas acerca do fenómeno das campanhas online (MAIA, GOMES e MARQUES, 2011).

A utilização da internet por diferentes atores como um ambiente importante de comunicação em disputas eleitorais suscita a investigação de novas práticas e significados que acabam por diferenciar as campanhas online das campanhas empreendidas nos media tradicionais (STROMER-GALLEY, 2000; BIMBER e DAVIS, 2003; AGGIO, 2010; MARQUES e CARDOSO, 2011). A interatividade seria um dos grandes potenciais e diferenciais dos media digitais, uma vez que, ao contrário do rádio, da televisão e do impresso, a internet oferece a oportunidade para que cidadãos, candidatos e partidos se engajem em interações pessoais de modo síncrono ou não, lançando mão de ferramentas variadas tais como salas de bate-papo, fóruns de discussão, transmissões audiovisuais com interações simultâneas via sites de relacionamento, dentre outras.

Ainda que os media tradicionais - e, mais especificamente, as instituições do campo jornalístico - cumpram um papel político fundamental nos sistemas demo-

cráticos (vide a promoção de transparência das esferas institucionais de decisão política, as ações de constrangimento que forçam explicações e prestações de contas dos agentes públicos etc., conforme explica Wilson Gomes (2004), suas características técnicas não permitem que os cidadãos, espalhados em diferentes regiões, tenham oportunidades, por exemplo, de interagir diretamente com seus representantes ou candidatos a ocuparem cargos eletivos.

A comparação entre as limitações permite verificar, ainda, a dificuldade dos media tradicionais em empreender iniciativas que transformem os eleitores em unidades de cooperação, mobilização e composição de um projeto político ligado a uma candidatura.

Uma vez que tal potencial técnico é identificado como típico dos recursos de comunicação digital, grande parte dos pesquisadores dedicados ao exame das campanhas online não deixa de discutir, naturalmente, a qualidade interativa e os níveis de participação dos eleitores nos ambientes de comunicação digital das campanhas (STROMER-GALLEY, 2000, WILLIAMS e TRAMMELL, 2005; VACCARI, 2008; SCHWEITZER, 2005). Ou seja, o potencial claramente se apresenta, mas é preciso averiguar em que medida ele vem sendo aproveitado de maneira a contemplar uma perspectiva que favoreça uma maior consideração dos cidadãos nos processos de deputação dos representantes políticos.

A pesquisadora americana Jennifer Stromer-Galley (2000) é, talvez, a maior referência no que se refere às discussões que atrelam a interatividade da internet e as campanhas políticas. A autora discorre, justamente, sobre o que considera a maior contribuição resultante da associação entre internet e campanhas políticas: as possibilidades de participação dos eleitores através de mecanismos interativos.

Stromer-Galley reconhece, de início, a importância da comunicação digital para a oferta e de informação política, na medida em que os candidatos e suas coordenações de campanha contam com a chance de oferecer dados valiosos sobre seus projetos de governo, diretrizes ideológicas e prioridades – tudo isso sem a necessidade de que tais insumos informativos sejam enquadrados de acordo com a lógica, critérios e gramáticas que são típicos dos media noticiosos. Desse modo, as campanhas dispõem de tempo e espaço suficientes para burlar a constante redução, por exemplo, das sonoridades dos agentes políticos - conforme atesta Daniel Hallin (1994) - em favor do reforço do papel do jornalista como articulador de sentido das informações políticas. No entanto, para a pesquisadora norte-americana, a real contribuição democrática das campanhas online estaria na apropriação do potencial interativo da internet para tirar os eleitores da função de meros espectadores.

É interessante notar, em tal contexto, que há gradações quanto às possibilidades participativas permitidas por cada administração de campanha. Há desde formas de intervenção rudimentares – imprimir material de campanha em casa e distribuir entre amigos e familiares – até iniciativas dedicadas a intervir efetivamente na formulação

de propostas. São justamente estas últimas proposições – que adotam uma perspectiva mais próxima do que os autores participacionistas defendem – que animam Stromer-Galley. A autora defende que as ferramentas interativas digitais devem ser utilizadas para que integrantes dos partidos, agentes das equipes de campanha, candidatos e eleitores promovam encontros a fim de trocar dados, esclarecer questões, formular tópicos de projetos e propostas e discutir prioridades de governo.

A situação ideal estabelecida pela autora, entretanto, não se limita à oferta pura e simples de mecanismos de intervenção a serem empregados por usuários das redes telemáticas. Jennifer Stromer-Galley argumenta sobre a necessidade de se extrapolar o mero tratamento estratégico que marca os esforços de comunicação das campanhas. A pesquisadora aponta para a importância de se promover uma conexão desses distintos “fóruns” e mecanismos participativos a uma espécie de sistema de prestação de contas, apto a garantir aos eleitores que suas intervenções foram levadas em consideração. Em outras palavras, percebe-se que critérios que são caros à representação democrática (como participação, transparência e responsividade) acabam sendo essenciais para se avaliar, também, os gradientes de democracia que caracterizam campanhas políticas. Os candidatos, naturalmente, desejam associar às suas imagens públicas atributos positivos, o que os força a incluir em suas estratégias eleitorais mecanismos de comunicação digital que foram planejados, em sua maioria, para aperfeiçoar a gestão de instituições do Estado (MARQUES e SAMPAIO, 2011).

Desconsiderar a dimensão estratégica e agonística daquelas ações que visam auferir lucros eleitorais seria, naturalmente, ingenuidade. A perspectiva Stromer-Galley (2000), contudo, não parece incompatível com os cálculos de riscos e as estratégias de marketing político típicas das campanhas contemporâneas. O que se reivindica aqui, nestes termos, é o reconhecimento da idéia de que os empreendimentos participativos acabam tanto servindo para a construção de laços fortes com os eleitores – que podem conformar um conjunto significativo de agentes mobilizados e interessados em doar tempo e energia em prol de uma candidatura – quanto para criar uma cultura de vigilância e acompanhamento de ações dos governos, dada a experiência vivida por um grupo de usuários.

Em outra medida, reunir cidadãos em torno de uma candidatura que se propõe a construir um projeto de governo colaborativo – alinhado a proposições e demandas de eleitores, independentemente dos mesmos serem filiados a partidos ou possuírem histórico de mobilização política – pode contribuir no combate ao crescente desinteresse político e falta de engajamento cívico diagnosticado por diferentes autores no contexto das democracias ocidentais contemporâneas (PUTNAM, 2000).

Embora a variedade de mecanismos de comunicação digital permita aproximar os cidadãos das coordenações de campanhas eleitorais de forma inédita, poucos são os partidos e candidatos que lançaram mão de tais recursos com o propósito de aumentar o envolvimento dos usuários no processo de escolha dos representantes. Mesmo

ferramentas tecnicamente viáveis (e que não demandam grandes investimentos de ordem financeira), a exemplo de chats e fóruns, cujo objetivo poderia ser estabelecer uma comunicação direta entre eleitores, candidatos e integrantes de partidos e das campanhas, são pouco utilizadas nas eleições ao redor do mundo (RACKAWAY, 2007; GULATI & WILLIAMS, 2007; VACCARI, 2008).

Também neste aspecto, Stromer-Galley (2000) parece oferecer as hipóteses mais razoáveis para explicar as razões pelas quais muitos partidos e candidatos preferem não optar por empreendimentos interativos que promovam discussões e debates e, em um nível mais rigoroso, descartam ferramentas que concedam aos eleitores maior poder de intervenção na composição substantiva das campanhas políticas.

A perda do benefício da ambigüidade e do controle sobre o conteúdo das mensagens da campanha seriam as razões a explicarem o receio da quase totalidade dos partidos e candidatos em não adotar mecanismos interativos. Munida de informações coletadas em entrevistas com integrantes de diversas campanhas empreendidas nos Estados Unidos em 1998, Jennifer Stromer-Galley (2000) certifica-se de que há um grande temor de que os posicionamentos, discursos e projetos das campanhas sofram questionamentos excessivos por parte dos cidadãos, forçando os candidatos a esclarecerem em pormenores as questões levantadas. Tal situação acarretaria no que a autora chama de perda do benefício da ambigüidade; ou seja, as vantagens embutidas no tratamento impreciso ou genérico de determinadas questões poderiam ser perdidas em uma situação de esclarecimento aprofundado.

A perda do controle sobre a mensagem se refere ao risco de exposição negativa à qual fica sujeito o candidato quando dá voz a usuários vinculados a campanhas adversárias. Em outras palavras, teme-se que o próprio espaço criado pelo candidato volte-se contra ele, já que o tratamento inadequado de questões delicadas pode fazer com que os próprios eleitores que já haviam sido conquistados retirem seu apoio por se sentirem particularmente ofendidos ou descontentados. Por um lado, este problema pode ser de fácil resolução, uma vez que os mecanismos de moderação já se mostraram suficientemente eficientes para coibir manifestações indesejadas em diferentes iniciativas na internet, como em blogs jornalísticos, por exemplo. Por outro lado, um controle estrito permite questionar o grau de transparência acerca, por exemplo, dos critérios adotados pelos moderadores.

No que tange ao benefício da ambigüidade, há de fato um risco estratégico em iniciativas interativas que promovam maior transparência e responsividade dos envolvidos em uma campanha, principalmente no que concerne a temas polêmicos - como sistema de cotas em universidades públicas, no caso brasileiro. No entanto, considerando a mesma dimensão estratégica, uma campanha que opta por lidar de forma direta e transparente com os eleitores, compartilhando com clareza seus objetivos e modelos de projeto político, bem como que abra espaço para que os cidadãos

colaborem com os rumos da campanha, tem maiores chances de criar vínculos fortes e promissores com os integrantes de sua base eleitoral.

Assim sendo, embora poucas sejam as iniciativas que permitam uma aproximação dialógica real entre campanha e eleitores através de mecanismos online, as eleições majoritárias brasileiras em 2010 ofereceram um caso singular no que se refere ao uso de dispositivos discursivos digitais. Trata-se do site chamado “Proposta Serra”, direcionado a aproximar os eleitores da condução da campanha de José Serra, candidato à Presidência pelo PSDB (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira). Tal experiência teve como propósito fundamental, em um primeiro momento, tornar as campanhas mais abertas a discussões com o eleitorado e, em um segundo instante, converter o eleitor - que antes exercia a função de espectador - em agente com capacidade de intervir na composição de um programa de governo.

Antes de examinar este caso propriamente, este trabalho se dedica a examinar brevemente um aspecto específico da literatura que hospedada na interface entre internet e democracia, a saber, as potencialidades e limites da deliberação online.

## Internet e deliberação pública: aspectos fundamentais

A idéia de democracia deliberativa ganhou maior proeminência em Teoria Política a partir dos anos 90. Pode-se dizer que os estudos mais recentes nesta área do conhecimento são marcados não apenas por alternativas direcionadas a enfrentar a alegada “crise da democracia”, mas, também, por tentativas de se conferir maior legitimidade aos processos de produção da decisão política. Os autores deliberacionistas – ainda que possam ser apontadas diferenças entre ênfases mais reformistas ou mais radicais – defendem, em termos gerais, uma maior influência por parte da esfera da cidadania através do uso público da razão, assim como o estabelecimento de fóruns de debate do qual tomam parte representantes e a esfera civil.

According to most proponents of deliberative democracy, political decision making is legitimate insofar as its policies are produced in a process of public discussion and debate which citizens and their representatives, going beyond mere self-interest and limited points of view, reflect on the general interest or on their common good (BOHMAN 1996, p. 4-5).

No caso do presente trabalho, o importante é enfatizar que, na arquitetura da vertente discursiva de democracia, a importância da intromissão da esfera civil se dá não apenas através de procedimentos como aqueles característicos do mecanismo de agregação das disposições eleitorais (método de participação considerado suficiente por tradições anteriores, como o elitismo de Schumpeter). Para os deliberacionistas, diversas outras demandas, em termos ideais ou normativos, deveriam ser levadas em



conta para se evitar um modelo de democracia meramente representativo, que pouco conta com qualidades substantivas em suas decisões. Conforme Peter Shane:

... deliberative democracy must be part of the reform package because election-centered democracy has not shown itself to be a sufficient guarantor of either the experience of political autonomy or the conscientious consideration of the interests of all persons to counter our current democratic malaise (SHANE, 2004, p. 73-74).

O objetivo, assim, é forçar representantes e instituições a exporem suas motivações em adotar ou não determinadas políticas, oferecendo aos cidadãos modos de aperfeiçoar as propostas e facilitar sua implementação. De acordo com James Bohman (1996), instituições efetivamente comprometidas em estimular formas mais abertas de participação precisam criar ao seu redor esferas públicas que abriguem discussões de natureza política.

Sabe-se que a adição de tais ingredientes discursivos não é tarefa fácil, sobretudo em um contexto de sociedades multiculturais complexas. O advento dos media digitais, entretanto, acaba trazendo um alento aos que acreditam na possibilidade de se tornar mais legítimo o processo de produção da decisão política que ocorre no âmbito das instituições representativas.

Assim sendo – e de acordo com o que foi discutido no início do texto –, ainda que haja uma série de problemas e críticas quanto ao emprego político dos *new media* (assim como acontece com os media tradicionais), presume-se que os recursos de comunicação oferecidos através da Internet poderiam conformar uma resposta adequada para problemas inerentes ao fazer democrático, como a reversão da apatia dos cidadãos (ao possibilitar voz, conexão e ação por parte de indivíduos ou organizações), o incremento das iniciativas de transparência governamental ou a lide com uma plataforma de comunicação dificilmente manipulável em toda sua extensão por um grupo específico (seja ele político ou econômico).

Independentemente das interpretações relativas à escala de mudanças promovidas pela Internet, o fato é que as redes telemáticas passam a se configurar como um novo espaço de intervenção pública, merecendo destaque por duas características principais: (1) o acesso à informação de modo instantâneo (ainda que se possa, em um segundo momento, questionar a qualidade dessa informação, o importante é que pelo menos um número maior de pontos de vistas têm como obter maior visibilidade), elemento essencial para a formação cívica; (2) a capacidade interativa, a troca dialógica, também fundamental para a noção de participação em jogo, agora liberta de constrições de espaço, tempo ou censura.

É perceptível, todavia, uma mudança na abordagem que caracteriza a literatura na área. De uma perspectiva direcionada a exaltar ou criticar excessivamente os potenciais e limites dos media digitais para o aperfeiçoamento das práticas políticas, passou-se ao exame mais cuidadoso das formas de uso efetivas que são conferidas

aos recursos de comunicação digital. Constatou-se, por exemplo, que não é graças à possibilidade técnica aberta por uma nova plataforma de comunicação que se pode atestar diferenças substanciais na forma de se fazer política. Em muitos casos, os governos e representantes ainda não se tornaram completamente abertos ao escrutínio público através da Internet, mas apenas começaram, de modo tímido, a marcarem certa presença institucional.

... [in the 1996, 1998 and 2000 races] campaign websites by mainstream candidates for the US House or Senate tended to be ‘all singin’, alldancin’ affairs, full of multi-media gizmos and gadgets like streaming videos, easily available and searchable in real-time, but essentially similar in function to traditional forms of communication such as published leaflets, position papers, press releases and television commercials (NORRIS, 2003, p. 24).

E no que se refere, mais exatamente, à noção de democracia deliberativa, às possibilidades da deliberação online? Em que medida a Internet abre espaço para a formação de fóruns deliberativos (sejam seus componentes deputados políticos ou não) e em que parâmetros se dá a discussão nestes fóruns? Por quais modos a criação destes fóruns permite uma maior participação e atuação dos usuários dos media digitais na vida política das sociedades? Estes fóruns favorecem a cooperação em termos justos e minimamente igualitários e recíprocos, conforme idealizado pelas propostas da democracia deliberativa? As instituições do Estado e os representantes políticos se mostram, de fato, mais abertos a prestarem contas aos cidadãos?

Antes de qualquer tentativa de se responder a tais perguntas, é necessário esclarecer a qual contexto político se está referindo. Sabe-se, por exemplo, que o comportamento dos agentes políticos se modifica de maneira substancial quando se está tratando de eleições – um momento especial da vitalidade das democracias e que pressupõe a presença permanente da esfera civil, que acompanha o desenrolar dos fatos e, no final, é quem tem o poder de decidir quem serão os mandatários (GOMES et al., 2009; DRUCKMAN et al., 2009). Tal cenário acaba provocando as candidaturas a abordarem de maneira mais incisiva o eleitor (não obstante o posicionamento dos candidatos na “corrida de cavalos” constituir um fator fundamental a influenciar na adoção mais ou menos ousada das ferramentas de comunicação digital).

Em termos gerais, o que se pode dizer é que grande parte das iniciativas perpetradas por candidatos e partidos varia quanto à capacidade de inserir os eleitores mais efetivamente no processo de escolha dos representantes. Há experiências que partem desde (a) um contato mais direto e constante entre os candidatos e cidadãos em fóruns, chats ou ferramentas similares direcionadas à realização de debates e esclarecimentos; passando por (b) mecanismos a permitirem um maior engajamento e mobilização dos usuários em prol de uma candidatura específica, a fim de contribuir, por exemplo, no desenvolvimento de estratégias; e chegam a (c) experiências que sinalizam a criação e o uso de plataformas dedicadas a permitirem a construção

de programas de governo de maneira colaborativa. Esta última possibilidade acaba encontrando associação no cenário eleitoral brasileiro, o que se pode constatar através do estudo do projeto “*Proposta Serra*”.

## **"Proposta Serra": Estrutura, objectivos e estratégia**

Após oito anos de governo do Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), que até 2002 exerceu um papel de oposição fundamental na democracia brasileira, o Brasil foi cenário de uma disputa acirrada pela sucessão do presidente mais popular na recente história política do país.

O então chefe do Poder Executivo Federal, Lula da Silva, lançou uma colega de partido, Dilma Rousseff, para disputar sua sucessão, na intenção de que ela enfrentasse o candidato José Serra, do Partido da Social Democracia (PSDB). O partido de Serra ocupou a Presidência com Fernando Henrique Cardoso nos oito anos que antecederam a eleição de Lula, em 2002. Considerado, antes do início oficial da campanha, o candidato com maiores chances de vencer o pleito, José Serra conduziu sua campanha coligado com partidos tradicionalmente alocados “à direita” no cenário político brasileiro, não obstante o próprio PSDB adotar uma postura centrista em diversas ocasiões.

A agenda de campanha de José Serra, portanto, esforçava-se em conciliar em sua plataforma questões sociais próprias do discurso de esquerda, assim como preocupações ligadas tradicionalmente ao discurso de direita, podendo ser citadas alusões ao livre mercado e a discussões de ordem moral que envolvem as liberdades individuais (como o direito ao porte de armas).

Foi ainda na disputa ao longo do primeiro turno das eleições que a campanha de José Serra lançou uma plataforma online de comunicação cujo objetivo era a construção de um plano de governo colaborativo, apto a agregar contribuições de cidadãos, especialistas e demais interessados em questões políticas relevantes para o Brasil<sup>1</sup>.

Conforme resume Xico Graziano, o mentor do projeto e um dos coordenadores do website, o “‘Proposta Serra’ ‘representa um movimento de idéias políticas, ligado ao PSDB e seus aliados nas eleições presidenciais de 2010, criado para elaborar abertamente o Programa de Governo de José Serra. Trata-se de uma plataforma democrática, colaborativa e transparente que aglutina pessoas interessadas na construção do futuro do País. Gente de todas as regiões - servidores públicos, acadêmicos, pequenos e grandes empresários, trabalhadores e estudantes, profissionais em geral, homens e mulheres, adultos e jovens - podem aqui contribuir com as propostas da social democracia brasileira”.

<sup>1</sup>Não há registros na literatura acerca de experiências similares desenvolvidas em alguma parte do mundo no contexto das campanhas online.

Criado sobre a plataforma Ning, que permite a construção de sites de redes sociais, o “Proposta Serra” exige que cada cidadão interessado em participar preencha um cadastro, montando seu perfil com dados pessoais, foto e com a possibilidade de cada participante montar um blog dentro do site. O grande propósito da iniciativa foi reunir cidadãos para discutir e colaborar com as propostas de campanha formatadas como plano de governo, o que se materializou mediante a criação de fóruns temáticos classificados de acordo com a região do país ou com a natureza da questão abordada. Por exemplo, fóruns relacionados a políticas agrárias ou sistema de cotas em instituições de ensino superior, podem ser encontrados tanto em seções divididas pelos estados da federação (ex. Bahia, Mato Grosso, etc) quanto por categoria (ex. Agricultura e Afrodescendentes).

## Metodologia

Se a baixa ocorrência de iniciativas de caráter dialógico nas campanhas online diminui as expectativas de uma participação mais aprofundada, o que dizer da aparente ausência mecanismos que voltados a transformar os eleitores em agentes aptos a influenciar, por exemplo, a construção de planos de governo colaborativos? Nesse sentido, as eleições para presidente do Brasil em 2010 parecem ter começado a escrever uma nova página na comunicação política digital dos partidos e candidatos. A campanha de José Serra manteve um site intitulado “Proposta Serra”, dedicado exclusivamente a compor um programa de governo colaborativo. Conforme explicado anteriormente, a plataforma funcionou como um “*network site*”, no qual eleitores construíam perfis, estabeleciam contatos entre si e criavam fóruns de temáticas que abordavam questões diversas, tais como agricultura, políticas para afrodescendentes, saúde, educação, infraestrutura, habitação, dentre outras questões. No dia 29 de outubro de 2010, faltando 5 dias para a data da votação, a organização do projeto lançou o programa de governo do candidato, resultado tanto das formulações do partido quanto da contribuição ofertada pelos cidadãos através do “Proposta Serra”<sup>2</sup>.

Tendo em vista a relevância de tal iniciativa para o fenômeno das campanhas online, este paper tem o objetivo de (1) examinar o teor dos debates dos 4 fóruns do “Proposta Serra”, utilizando como estratégia metodológica a análise de conteúdo das mensagens trocadas nos fóruns assíncronos disponibilizados pela ferramenta (N=200). Em outras palavras, busca-se averiguar se houve, de fato, a busca por uma compreensão mútua, dissenso ou *flames* entre os participantes dos debates. Para tanto, serão utilizados 5 indicadores inspirados na teoria de democracia deliberativa e dos estudos de deliberação online (Reciprocidade, Reflexividade, Respeito, Justificação

<sup>2</sup><http://serra45.podbr.com/downloads/Programa-de-Governo-Jose-Serra.pdf>

e Informação), que conforme a pesquisa de Sampaio, Barros e Morais (2011), são os mais utilizados nos estudos de deliberação online. Foram escolhidos os tópicos:

- A) “Revisão da lei 10.826 (estatuto do desarmamento)”<sup>3</sup> com 1622 contribuições,
- B) “Privatizar as universidades federais”<sup>4</sup>, com 390 comentários,
- C) “Baixar o preço dos alimentos”<sup>5</sup>, 204 postagens,
- D) “Ações afirmativas sim – se necessário cotas sim”<sup>6</sup>, com 106 mensagens.

A seleção do corpus empírico se referiu à seleção das 50 últimas mensagens de cada tópico, postadas entre 22 de julho de 2010 e 27 de setembro de 2010. Foram escolhidos 2 tópicos polêmicos (cotas e desarmamento), uma vez que se espera que a deliberação aconteça com maior intensidade em momentos de rompimento, discussão aprofundada de problemas e necessidade de solução (HABERMAS, 1997); além disso, pesquisas anteriores demonstraram maiores índices de deliberatividade quando se trata de temas polêmicos (SAMPAIO, MAIA e MARQUES, 2010). E dois tópicos que se esperava menor polêmica, a privatização de universidades e políticas de controle dos preços de alimentos.

De maneira simples, pode-se dizer que quanto maiores os índices de presença de tais indicadores (Reciprocidade, Reflexividade, Respeito, Justificação e Informação), maior será a deliberatividade, ou, ainda, melhor será a qualidade da discussão em relação aos aspectos valorizados pela teoria deliberativa (DAHLBERG, 2004).

A moderação e o cadastro também são quesitos importantes na deliberação online (JANSSEN, KIES, 2005). O cadastro era obrigatório no Proposta Serra. As discussões são inclusive fechadas para quem não é cadastrado. E o cadastro só é ativado após a autorização de algum dos moderadores do site. Não há regras específicas que mostram como funcionou a moderação do site. Porém, em nosso corpus, não encontramos nenhuma mensagem de moderador ou mesmo de qualquer integrante da campanha oficial do candidato Serra.

## Reciprocidade

A reciprocidade é o elemento mais básico da deliberação. Trata-se do simples ato de ler as mensagens dos outros usuários e de responder a elas. Não se avalia o

<sup>3</sup><http://propostaserra.ning.com/forum/topics/revisao-da-lei-10826-estatuto?id=5855449:Topic:12166&page=1#comments>

<sup>4</sup><http://propostaserra.ning.com/forum/topics/privatizar-as-universidades>

<sup>5</sup><http://propostaserra.ning.com/forum/topics/baixar-o-preco-dos-alimentos?id=5855449:Topic:44325&page=1#comments>

<sup>6</sup><http://propostaserra.ning.com/forum/topics/acoes-afirmativas-sim-se?id=5855449:Topic:19611&page=1#comments>



nível de elaboração da resposta. Logo, as mensagens podem ser *dialógicas* (1) se responderem a outro usuário ou mesmo ao assunto do tópico; ou *monológicas* (2), caso contrário (DAHLBERG, 2004; JANSSEN e KIES, 2005). Pela própria natureza do fórum analisado, também pode ser adicionado o código *Responde ao candidato* (3), quando o participante se dirige diretamente a José Serra.

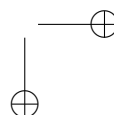
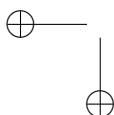
## Reflexividade

A *reflexividade* (4) diz respeito à condição de um usuário ser flexível com os argumentos apresentados por outrem e levá-los em consideração para a construção dos seus próprios. Além disso, pela reflexividade, o sujeito na deliberação se dispõe a revisar suas opiniões e, talvez, modificá-las a partir da argumentação de outro indivíduo (MAIA, 2008a; JENSEN, 2003). O critério será avaliado por aparição. As mensagens serão consideradas reflexivas quando apresentarem uma nova perspectiva que acrescenta ao debate, quando o usuário tenta fazer um resumo (ou organização da discussão) ou quando alguém que toma parte no debate afirma ter sido convencido por opinião alheia.

## Justificação

Segundo a teoria deliberativa, manifestações favoráveis ou contrárias a decisões coletivas carecem de justificação em termos que possam ser aceitas por os indivíduos que são afetados por essas decisões (HABERMAS, 1997; MAIA, 2008b).

Todavia, a deliberação não precisa ser baseada apenas em argumentos racionais. As experiências pessoais podem facilitar o entendimento por parte dos usuários quanto à natureza dos problemas expostos, especialmente, no que concerne às questões próximas às suas realidades e às suas necessidades. Logo, são tomadas duas classificações neste quesito. A *Justificação Externa* (5) é aquela em que o usuário utiliza fontes externas para manter seu argumento, como fatos, dados, pesquisas, notícias etc. A *Justificação Interna* (6) é baseada no próprio ponto de vista do usuário, que utiliza explicitamente seus padrões, valores e histórico pessoal (em suma, testemunhos) para apoiar um argumento (JANSSEN, KIES, 2005; JENSEN, 2003). As duas formas de justificativas não foram consideradas auto-excludentes; logo uma mensagem poderia receber ambos os códigos por conter mais de um tipo de justificação.





## Respeito

Finalmente, todos os outros indicadores pressupõem a existência de respeito mútuo entre os participantes da deliberação. Na presença do respeito, os participantes poderão apresentar argumentos racionais, refletir na presença de outros argumentos e buscar o entendimento comum. Todavia, Papacharissi (2004) demonstra que nem toda forma de comunicação rude destrói a deliberação. Os debates podem se tornar quentes, inflamados, gerar discórdia e mesmo assim avançarem. Desta forma, busca-se avaliar as mensagens com tom “respeitoso” (7), ou seja, aquelas nas quais o usuário demonstra respeito a outro participante ou grupos (como o respeito aos negros, aos índios e às mulheres, por exemplo). Por outro lado, a mensagem será considerada de tom “agressivo” (8) se contiver ofensas, ironias agressivas, ódio, preconceito etc. (JENSEN, 2003; MIOLA, 2009).

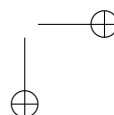
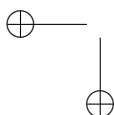
## Informação

Apesar de não ser exatamente um componente da deliberatividade das mensagens, a pesquisa de Sampaio, Barros e Morais (2011) demonstrou que a informação é um indicador bastante utilizado nos estudos de deliberação online. Para alcançar bons resultados, a discussão deve ser informada, substantiva e consciente (Levine, Fung, Gastil, 2005). E, como já demonstrou Stromer-Galley (2007), pode ser importante e construtivo verificar as fontes de informação (source) utilizadas pelos participantes da deliberação. Assim, buscou-se avaliar as fontes citadas pelos debatedores. Foram encontradas: mídia (9); relatórios de pesquisa ou leis (10) [governamentais ou associações civis], outra proposta (11) [link para outro tópico do “Proposta Serra”].

## Resultados

Em termos gerais, é possível perceber que houve grande comprometimento dos participantes em ler e responder as mensagens, uma vez que mais de 90% (91,5%) das postagens representam dialogicidade. Porém, menos de 10% (8,5%) se preocupou em “conversar” com Serra ou sua equipe de campanha, demonstrando que os fóruns analisados foram mais utilizados para a conversa horizontal, entre os próprios usuários. Apenas no tópico do desarmamento, muitos eleitores condenaram a posição do candidato em ser favorável ao desarmamento, enquanto os participantes defendiam o direito à posse pessoal de armas.

Igualmente, a taxa de reflexividade foi bastante elevada, superando os 60% (66,5%). Isto indica que grande parte dos integrantes da proposta não se preocupou apenas em responder aos outros participantes, mas, também, apresentou novas opiniões, pontos



Códigos	Proposta 1	Proposta 2	Proposta 3	Proposta 4	Total
Num. de mensagens	50	50	50	50	200 (100%)
Dialógico	48	45	44	46	183 (91,5%)
Monológica	2	5	6	4	17 (8,5%)
Responde ao candidato	19	0	0	0	19 (9,5%)
Justificação Externa	23	26	21	17	87 (43,5%)
Justificação Interna	2	3	1	3	9 (4,5%)
Reflexividade	32	38	32	31	133 (66,5%)
Tom Respeitoso	22	7	10	17	56 (28%)
Tom Agressivo	7	3	3	17	30 (15%)
Informação: Mídia	2	1	3	3	9 (4,5%)
Informação: Relatório ou lei	2	5	1	0	8 (4%)
Informação: Outra proposta	0	0	1	3	4 (2%)

Tabela 1: Resultados.

de vista, reflexões ou, simplesmente, apontou porque já concordava com as posições presentes. Tal constatação é, em certa medida, reforçada pelo número significativo de justificativas externas - que superou os 40% (43,5%) -, demonstrando que os usuários tentaram apresentar razões amplas para seus argumentos. O testemunho, todavia, foi pouco utilizado (4,5%), mesmo em temas que podem acionar históricos de vida, como a questão de cotas para negros. O resultado, porém, é compatível com outras pesquisas realizadas anteriormente (SAMPAIO e BARROS, 2010; SAMPAIO, MAIA e MARQUES, 2010; SAMPAIO e DANTAS, 2011).

Conforme as pesquisas mencionadas logo acima, os temas polêmicos apresentaram tanto um índice maior de respeito quanto de agressividade. Ou seja, por um lado, os participantes apelam para a defesa (proteção, direitos e afins) dos grupos concernidos na temática, mas, por outro lado, a discussão se torna mais “quente”. A discussão sobre cotas, em certo momento, se transformou em acusações de preconceito e de falta de orgulho da raça negra. Esse tópico representou mais de 50% de todas as mensagens agressivas.

Finalmente, apesar de apresentar boa reflexividade e alta justificação acessível aos outros participantes, o índice de citação das fontes das informações ainda foi baixo, representando 10,5% das mensagens. Foi perceptível que muitas vezes há citação a um dado, mas não se revela sua fonte. No caso do desarmamento, por exemplo, diversos eleitores citam o fato de que 60 milhões de brasileiros foram contrários à lei de desarmamento no referendo, mas nenhum ofereceu um link para esse dado.

No geral, os índices de deliberatividade foram altos em todos os quatro fóruns. Em pesquisas anteriores (SAMPAIO e BARROS, 2010; SAMPAIO, MAIA e MAR-



QUES, 2010; SAMPAIO e DANTAS, 2011), foi perceptível uma maior variação de acordo com o tema, mas, neste estudo, apenas a presença do respeito e da agressividade sofreram uma variação pertinente. Os valores da deliberatividade de reciprocidade, reflexividade e justificativa externa simplesmente foram altos em todas as discussões.

## Considerações Finais

A discussão acerca da importância da participação política ganhou um novo fôlego na pauta de investigações de pesquisadores das áreas de Ciências Humanas e Sociais desde que as ferramentas digitais passaram a ser empregadas por partidos e candidatos em disputas eleitorais.

Na verdade, a utilização da internet por partidos e candidatos em disputas eleitorais já se tornou uma prática essencial dos esforços de comunicação das campanhas políticas empreendidas em grande parte das democracias ocidentais contemporâneas. As discussões teóricas formadas em torno das chamadas campanhas online são sustentadas, fundamentalmente, pelos potenciais específicos da internet e suas aplicações para que a comunicação política de partidos.

Dentre as posições mais importantes no conjunto das pesquisas, certamente as formulações de Jennifer Stromer-Galley ocupam um lugar de destaque. A pesquisadora norte-americana defende que as campanhas empreendidas na internet não devem funcionar nos moldes e padrões da comunicação de massa tradicionais, mas, sim, sob a tônica de maior participação e interferência dos cidadãos na construção de um projeto político representado por uma campanha.

As eleições majoritárias brasileiras em 2010 constituem um caso particular a chamar a atenção de estudiosos da área. O “Proposta Serra” reuniu eleitores em fóruns de discussão temáticos para a formulação de propostas que, posteriormente, seriam adicionadas no programa de governo da candidatura.

O estudo empírico revelou fortes evidências de que o “Proposta Serra” ofereceu um espaço discursivo que foi utilizado de forma ampla pelos participantes. Os usuários que escolheram se envolver na experiência apresentaram propostas, idéias e teceram argumentações ligadas a diferentes temas, mesmo aqueles de grande controvérsia (cotas e desarmamento) ou complexidade (como controle de preços e inflação). Os altos valores de deliberatividade demonstram que as trocas discursivas foram, de maneira geral, qualificadas e que o espaço cumpriu bem sua função de permitir maior reflexão e diálogo entre os eleitores. Ao contrário do suposto por céticos da deliberação online, mesmo não havendo forte presença de moderadores para guiar e controlar as discussões, os debates evoluíram e geraram propostas, argumentos e contrapropostas relevantes. Somente o fato do fórum ser totalmente fechado a membros cadastrados que dificulta a participação. Boa parte das discussões são pertinentes e poderiam aju-

dar um eleitor indeciso a se posicionar ou a conhecer melhor a plataforma de Serra, porém, esse mesmo eleitor pode não ter vontade o suficiente para se cadastrar no site. O cadastro poderia ser obrigatório para aumentar a responsividade dos integrantes em relação à discussão (cf. Janssen, Kies, 2005), porém a visualização da discussão poderia ser aberta a qualquer interessado.

Há, todavia, a questão sobre como tais propostas foram endereçadas no que concerne à composição do documento final. Apesar de possuir uma premissa participativa, o “Proposta Serra” não é claro em suas regras de seleção. Se, por um lado, mostrou-se que as discussões eram empreendidas em grande parte pelos eleitores (como está marcado no documento final), por outro lado, não há referência alguma ao modo de seleção de tais propostas - que, ao fim, podem apenas ser inseridas de acordo com a agenda prévia do candidato.

No tópico do desarmamento, por exemplo, diversos participantes se mostraram frustrados, pois mesmo a discussão sendo frutífera não gerou output oficial da equipe de campanha do candidato. Há, mesmo, usuários que só se manifestam para afirmar que não mais votarão no candidato, uma vez que ele não tem uma proposta firme para o direito ao porte de armas. Ou seja, a falta de regras explícitas e a ausência da participação de integrantes “oficiais” da campanha pode gerar essa sensação de baixa eficácia, uma frustração que pode levar o eleitor a se retirar da iniciativa.

É importante perceber que a oferta de oportunidades discursivas de participação no caso em tela admite interpretações ligadas, por exemplo, às estratégias de campanhas eleitoral do candidato José Serra. Isto é, ainda que seja aberto espaço para a participação e para o debate, com promessas de consideração das contribuições dos cidadãos no estabelecimento de diretrizes que comporiam a agenda de Serra caso ele fosse eleito, o “Proposta Serra” compõe, sem dúvidas, o rol de artifícios do candidato voltados a reforçar o vínculo com o eleitor já conquistado (não apenas “pregando para os convertidos”, mas trazendo-os, mesmo, para a parte administrativa da campanha) e a angariar novos apoiadores.

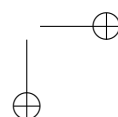
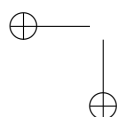
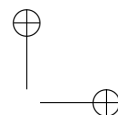
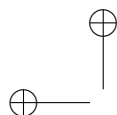
Da mesma forma que um conjunto considerável de pesquisas se esforça em compreender que fatores estimulam milhares de usuários a acreditarem e tomarem parte em projetos participativos (MARQUES, 2008) é necessário investigar, também, o que leva uma instituição, representante ou mesmo candidato a adotar uma postura mais aberta à influência por parte da esfera civil. Fundamental se faz verificar, ainda, em que medida tais posturas participativas representam modificações efetivas no plano prático. Será que influenciar na configuração do plano de governo significa alguma coisa para os usuários, além da mera satisfação em ver seu nome lá? Ter uma idéia ou sugestão aceita pela coordenação de campanha e que tenha passado a integrar o plano de governo permite inferir que tais contribuições serão, efetivamente, adotadas uma vez que aquele candidato seja eleito? Novas investigações são necessárias a fim de preencher estas lacunas.

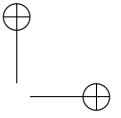
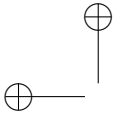
## Referências

- AGGIO, C. Campanhas Online: O percurso de formação das questões, problemas e configurações a partir da literatura produzida entre 1992 e 2009. *Opinião Pública* (UNICAMP. Impresso), v. 16, p. 426-445, 2010.
- BIMBER, Bruce. *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*. Cambridge University Press, 2003
- BIMBER, Bruce e DAVIS, Richard. *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*. Oxford: OXFORD University Press, 2003.
- BOHMAN, J. *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity and Democracy*. Cambridge, MIT Press. 1996.
- DAHLBERG, L. Net-Public Sphere Research: Beyond the 'First Phase'. *Javnost-The Public*, Liubliana, Eslovênia, v. 11, n. 1, p. 27-44, 2004.
- DRUCKMAN, J.; KIFER, M.; PARKIN, M. The Technological Development of Candidate Web Sites: How and Why Candidates Use Web Innovations. In: PANAGOPOULOS, Costas (Org.). *Politicking online: the transformation of election campaign communications*. University Press, Piscataway, 2009, p. 21-47.
- GOMES, W. S. *Transformações da política na era da comunicação de massa*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Paulus, 2004.
- GOMES, W.S.; FERNANDES, B.; SILVA, T. "POLITICS 2.0": A campanha on-line de Barack Obama em 2008. *Sociologia e Política*, Curitiba, v. 17, n. 34, p. 29-43, 2009.
- HABERMAS, J. **Direito e Democracia**: entre facticidade e validade. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Tempo Brasileiro, 1997. v. 2.
- HALLIN, D. Soundbite news: television coverage of elections, 1968-1988. In: D. HALLIN, *We keep America on top of the world: Television journalism and the public sphere*. New York: Routledge, 1994: p. 133-152.
- JANSSEN, D.; KIES, R. Online Forums and Deliberative Democracy. **Acta Politica**, v. 40, p. 317-335, 2005.
- JENSEN, J. L. Public Spheres on the Internet: Anarchic or Government-Sponsored – A Comparison. **Scandinavian Political Studies**, v. 26, n. 4, 2003.

- LEVINE, Peter; FUNG, Archon; GASTIL, John. Future Directions for Public Deliberation. GASTIL, John; LEVINE, Peter (Orgs.). **The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: strategies for effective civic engagement in the twenty-first century**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- MAIA, R. C. M. Democracia e a Internet como Esfera Pública Virtual: Aproximação as condições de deliberação. In: GOMES, W; MAIA; R. **Comunicação e Democracia**. São Paulo. Editora Paulus, 2008a, p. 276-292.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (coordenadora). **Mídia e Deliberação**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2008b.
- MAIA, R. C. M. (Org.); GOMES, W.S. (Org.); MARQUES, F. P. J. A. (Org.). Internet e Participação Política no Brasil (no prelo). Porto Alegre: Editora Sulina, 2011.
- MARQUES, F.P.J.A. Participação política e internet: meios e oportunidades digitais de participação civil na democracia contemporânea, com um estudo do caso brasileiro. Salvador, 2008. 498 f. Tese (Doutorado em Comunicação e Cultura Contemporâneas) – PósCom/UFBA, 2008.
- MARQUES, F.P.J.A.; SAMPAIO, R.C. Election after Election: Rupturas e continuidades nos padrões mediáticos das campanhas políticas online. Texto apresentado no 20º Encontro Anual da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação (COMPÓS). Porto Alegre, UFRGS.
- MIOLA, E. A Deliberação Online em ambientes institucionais. Um Estudo do Fórum de Discussão do Portal da Câmara dos Deputados. **Contemporânea**, Salvador, v. 7, n. 2, Dez. 2009.
- NORRIS, P. Preaching to the Converted?: Pluralism, Participation and Party Websites. *Party Politics*. January, 2003 9: 21-45.
- PAPACHARISSI, Z. Democracy online: civility, politeness, and the democratic potential of online political discussion groups. **New Media and Society**, v. 6, n.2, p. 259-283, 2004.
- PUTNAM, R.. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2000.
- SAMPAIO, R. C.; BARROS, S. A. R. Deliberação no jornalismo online: um estudo dos comentários do Folha.com. **Intexto**, Porto Alegre, v. 2, n. 23 p. 183- 202, Jul./Dez. 2010.
- SAMPAIO, R. C.; BARROS, S. A. R.; MORAIS, R. Como avaliar a deliberação online? Um mapeamento dos critérios. Artigo não publicado

- SAMPAIO, R. C.; MAIA, R. C. M.; MARQUES, F. P. J. A. Participação e deliberação na internet: Um estudo de caso do Orçamento Participativo Digital de Belo Horizonte. *Opinião Pública*, Campinas, v. 16, n. 2, p.446-477, Nov. 2010.
- SAMPAIO, R. C.; DANTAS, M. L. Deliberação online em fóruns de discussão: Um estudo dos potenciais democráticos do Cidadão Repórter. *Contracampo*, N. 22, fevereiro de 2011.
- SCHWEITZER, Eva Johanna. Election Campaigning Online: German Party Websites in the 2002 National Elections. *European Journal of Communication*; 20; 327. 2005.
- SHANE, P. “The Electronic Federalist: The Internet and the Eclectic Institutionalization of Democratic Legitimacy”, in *Democracy Online*, P.Shane (ed), New York: Routledge. 2004.
- STROMER-GALLEY, J. On-Line Interaction and Why Candidates Avoid It. *Journal of Communication*. 50,4 p. 111., 2000
- STROMER-GALLEY, J. Measuring Deliberation’s Content: A Coding Scheme. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, v. 3, 2007.
- VACCARI, Cristian. Research Note: Italian Parties' Websites in the 2006 Elections. *European Journal of Communication*; 23; 69. 2008
- WILLIAMS, Andrew Paul e TRAMMELL, Kaye D. Candidate Campaign E-Mail Messages in the Presidential Election 2004. *American Behavioral Scientist*; 49; 560. 2005





# The globalization-friendly global public sphere: contrasting paths to moral legitimacy and accountability.

Catherine Fleming Bruce

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the idea of global public sphere, drawn from Jurgen Habermas' public sphere concept, introduced in 1962, and transformed through the realities of globalization. One critical impact on the political dimension is the movement of some decision-making power from the nation-state, or country level, to the global level. This change presents challenges, despite accommodating restructuring of the United Nations and its organizations<sup>1</sup>.

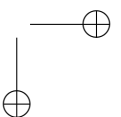
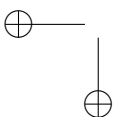
A vital challenge is to accountability: citizens have no elected officials or policy makers to hold accountable at the global level. Losing this component of the public sphere can either be accepted with an alternative that decision-makers are willing to embrace, or rejected, and ways to improve the accountability factor sought.

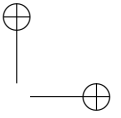
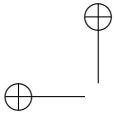
Globalization also caused rulemaking organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) to be formed, organizations that some felt would work to the disadvantage not only of developing countries, but of all citizens, who are locked out of the decision-making process. New forms of governance were created that expanded the global public sphere to some degree. These include an increase in the number of global forums, such as the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS), and an increase in civil society participation. Despite the fact that the World Summit for the Information Society was held in Tunisia, many organizations documented free speech violations even as the event was taking place. Local Tunisians were excluded from the process. In January 2011, a revolution took place, and Tunisians overthrew the national government. Might a well-constructed global public sphere have eliminated the need for street revolution?

This paper assesses ethical and heuristic paths to transformation of the public sphere ideal from the national decision-making locus to the global, or transnational,

---

<sup>1</sup>The emergence of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force, an array of associated organizations on both sides of the Cold War divide, and new UN organizations, such as United Nations Education, Social and Communications Organization (UNESCO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and General Agreement on Tariffs (GATT) were created. Some existing organizations, such as the International Telecommunications Union, were attached to the new UN economic and social structure.' 'The UN Tangle: Policy formation, reform and reorganization.' Leon Gordenker, *World Peace Foundation Reports*. Cambridge, 1996, p. 11.





by considering recent literature, and reviewing the hermeneutic scholarship of Hans-Georg Gadamer. This author incorporates Gadamer's concepts into a new model of global public sphere, with structural features from new media that increase moral legitimacy and political accountability. This project expands the utility of the global public sphere concept in communications theory, in concert with the disciplines of ethics, social psychology, international law and public policy

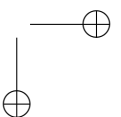
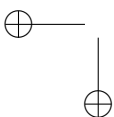
**Keywords:** global public sphere, legitimacy, governance.

## **Introduction.**

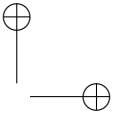
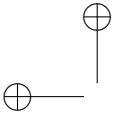
### **On the nature of the global Public Sphere.**

At the local, state and national levels of politics, the quality of life for citizens remains a burden of communications. 'Keeping politicians honest', providing access to public information, transparency and open lines between citizens and their government has been a constant centerpiece of mass media practice, policy, philosophy and law. In 1962, the European community was introduced to a new theoretical concept for media in political life: German philosopher Jurgen Habermas (1929-present) public sphere theory, an enduring concept in normative and communications theory which created an idealized model and set of constructs within which national political communication might effectively take place. Habermas' model of the public sphere responded to social structural divisions reflected in the works of Marx and Hegel, and were designed to create a platform by which citizens have their opinions both heard and shaped, as well as providing some participation in the actions of governments, so that elections could properly hold political actors accountable. The institutional foundations described in Habermas *Structural transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), a most influential text and frequent reference point, 'is an immensely fruitful generator of new research, analysis and theory' on the structural preconditions of the bourgeois public sphere (Crack 2007).

Several phenomena exist that make it necessary to address the theme of global public sphere construction: the first is globalization and the challenges that it creates for national governments and for global governance. The second is the ongoing necessity of re-establishing and maintaining the moral and social legitimacy of the international governance system that globalization has created. The third is the issue of accountability, and expansion of civil society and non-governmental organizations who claim to speak for global citizens within the public sphere. In order to proceed in examination of these issues, globalization must first be not only defined and placed into a context of social science ethical and epistemic discourse, but also compared







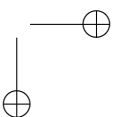
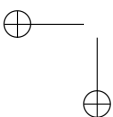
with alternative heuristic models that might address the challenges to a global public sphere more usefully.

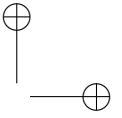
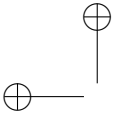
Habermas' seminal work on public sphere thought continues to produce new streams of debate and theoretical expansion in mass communications research, as well as in other fields. Throughout the 1970's, one of those famous theoretical sparrings occurred between Habermas and fellow German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) as they focused on constructs in hermeneutics, the field of understanding and interpretation. While many aspects of this form of theory were debated between the two, the public sphere was not specifically a part of the debate. Yet elements of hermeneutics which emphasize history, culture, criticism and pragmatism can enlighten discourse of the global public sphere, and its construction in an age of globalization, possibly unpacking descriptions of globalization that suggest the need for another means of defining and describing the phenomenon. It is for this reason that the ideas and concepts of Gadamer are contrasted with Habermas' public sphere concepts in order to construct a global public sphere.

## **Globalization and Alternative Heuristic models.**

During this 1980s and 1990s, the suggested reality of globalization was having a multi-pronged impact on every country. Globalization, defined by a United Nations report as 'increasing integration of a national economy with the world economy through exchange of goods and services, capital flows, technology, information, and labor migration' (Osmani 2006) speaks in this description only to its economic dimensions. One impact on the political dimension has been the movement of some decision-making power from the nation-state, or country level, to the global level. A continuum in the effort to universalize ethics, through a 'projection of and externalization, at the international level, of such core political and legal democratic values as equality, freedom and individual rights, an effort led by powerful Western democratic nations (Coicaud and Warner 2005) provides both justification for the emerging global public sphere, and some mistrust in its direction.

This mistrust and imbalance in globalization points the focus to rulemaking organizations, formed in a manner that some felt would work to the disadvantage not only of developing countries, but of all citizens regardless of country, who are thought to be locked out and maneuvered out of decision-making power. An example of this type of rulemaking organization is the World Trade Organization (WTO), which has been the subject of many global protests. The response to these rulemaking organizations has been a heightened emphasis on human rights activism and civil society engagement at the global level. These new forms of governance include an increase in the number of global forums, and in the level of civil society group participation. Some scholars have therefore asserted that globalization has forced changes that con-





tributed to the emergence of a global public sphere, and express the critical nature of promoting inclusion through this form of communication.

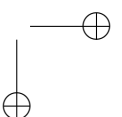
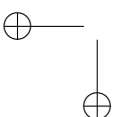
In contrast, social scientists Lizardo and Strand (2002) suggest that globalization theory is being deployed as a substitute for analysing some of the issues raised by postmodernists. Key issues in postmodernism are the enlightenment project and the continual applied problems of ethical and epistemic relativism, while market-driven globalization represents the institutional and material embodiment of what were formerly the intellectual and the cultural. The focus on 'the social fact of globalization' in public sphere theory means that an intellectual shift has already taken place for communications scholars. They argue that use of this particular heuristic model of addressing the modern/postmodern transition has been transposed as a new way to conceptualize the global process. A general question of globalization prior to these four registers would be 'how do we address the challenges and aspects of creating an international community?' Many of these issues fall into categories that can be impacted by mass communication, as it is the most pertinent contributor to the creation of a formal global community with significant interactions between actors from the nation-state, multinational corporation, and non-government realms.

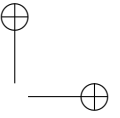
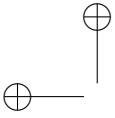
While the neo-liberal and capitalist themes continue to gain attention from globalization theorists, many of the post-modern themes remain inadequately addressed in modern times: commodification of labor, strife within and between political bases of power; revolution against authority and violence exercised by nation-states against its citizens based on class, race or ethnicity; are now more urgent and frequent. Lizardo's view that the substitution of globalization analysis for postmodernism, as well as continuing problems pose challenges to global decision-making processes and the institutions that conduct these processes signals that these issues are far from being resolved.

## **Legitimacy in the international governance system.**

Legitimacy is not defined here in Max Weber terms of power and coercion, but defined instead in terms of values and modes of action. The values might best be described as a search for ways to bend state behavior to fit a 'moral or social legitimacy', represented by those international norms which are 'products of historical and political evolution (Connolly 1984). The world's people are 'increasingly seeing that certain values are essential to their human dignity, and are more willing to participate in various public processes to achieve the translation of those values into global and domestic policy, a fact noted in the increasing calls for a 'moral budget' in the United States.

However, Berger and Luckmann see legitimacy as a general process. (1967) stating that legitimacy is what lends an 'objective' quality to a socially constructed re-





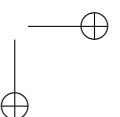
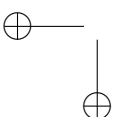
ality; that this is the ‘way by which the instrumental world can be explained and justified’. The process of creating legitimacy defines reality, creating a world of accepted institutions and providing the people who inhabit that world with order and shelter from uncertainty. My interest is seeing whether this is done in international society through ethical and democratic practice, and how the public sphere is part of that process. Berger and Luckmann’s general process of creating legitimacy establishes a base of socially accepted behavior and norms defining the institutional world of international society. Violation of normative expectations that international organizations will not act in a certain manner might generate negative public scrutiny and government regulation, and other negative repercussions.

## **Accountability and Citizen Representation in the global public sphere.**

States that put power and interests before norms and values need external pressure (of bad publicity or sanctions) to enter the sphere of norms and human rights values. External pressure and strategic bargaining give way to the process of ‘argumentative discourses in the Habermasian sense of civil society (Risse and Skink 1999). Rather than power and instrumentality ‘socialization through moral discourse emphasizes processes of communication, argument and deliberation’, or as rather than self-interest, actors accept the validity and significance of norms in their discursive practices (Chandler 2004). Civil society organizations, or non-government organizations, provide this external pressure and strategic bargaining as well as the Habermasian sense of argumentative discourses. Yet these organizations do not replicate the political accountability of elected representatives, leaving citizens with less voice in the process.

Scholars Nans and Steffek don’t see the transnational public sphere as a distinct or overarching realm of broad public deliberation at the global level. Instead, their vision of the public sphere corresponds to the model of functional decision-making and functional participation in the deliberative forums of governance arrangements, such as the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS). Their definition of democratic legitimacy accepts deliberation as a substitute for democratic process, and transforms public sphere to accommodate that acceptance. Some scholars suggest that actors from organized civil society have the potential to act as a discursive interface between the two, and in doing so play a vital role in the creation of a global public sphere. Further, because global governance is functionally differentiated and highly technical, there is also this gap to be bridged.

Despite the claims of mass media that transparency is provided, bureaucrats and experts continue to come together behind closed doors, free from intrusion of man-



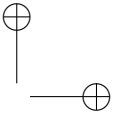
dated public representatives and interest groups in their decision-making processes. Nanz and Steffek suggest a well-informed and consensus-seeking discussion in expert committees that are embedded in international decision-making procedures. This approach to deliberation: inspired from public policy and international relations theory highlighting the importance of scientific expertise and consensus-seeking within epistemic communities of experts (Haas 1992; Cogburn 2005). Deliberation among experts is seen as a key device of good governance by administrations.

Frazer links the concept of global public sphere to the concept of **normative legitimacy**. Defining it thusly: public opinion is legitimate 'if and only if all who are potentially affected are able to participate as peers in deliberations concerning the organization of their common affairs', these with conditions of **inclusiveness** (discussion open to all with a stake in the outcome), and **parity** (all participants have an equal chance to state their views, and engage in dialogue'). Frazer has chosen to use the term 'normative legitimacy', indicating her emphasis on principles of fairness, such as 'inclusiveness', 'parity', and 'equity', pursuant to her focus on theories of social justice (Frazer 2009).

## Understanding Habermas' heuristic vision of global public sphere.

From the initial introduction of Habermas' public sphere theory in the late 1960s, to its gradual expansion from the late 1980's, the most significant challenges it has faced are to its ability to remain intact or transform in light of worldwide structural changes. Habermas' unique heuristic model not only supports the transformation of his public sphere theory from national to global, but also provides his rejoinder to issues of legitimacy, accountability and citizen participation identified in the opening chapter. Examining the institutional, experiential and geo-political roots of Habermas' heuristic model for a global public sphere suggest a root in political and national traditions of social thought. The German tradition of Social Science, in which Habermas and Gadamer are both rooted, the Second World War and the reign of Hitler and his Third Reich were overwhelming features in the political, cultural, economic, ethical, moral and social landscapes during the time of their early formation. For Jurgen Habermas in particular, it is suggested these experiences were incorporated into his heuristic vision for the public sphere, in way that had critical implications for efforts to address challenges of legitimacy and accountability in the global transition (Lizardo and Strand 2002)

In German traditional social theory, the state is prior to the individual and to the corporate producer of economic action. Unlike the perspective found in American social and political thought, individuals were considered subordinate to the state, with



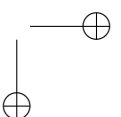
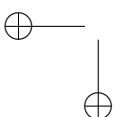
less emphasis on individual freedoms. Habermas scholar Craig Calhoun underscores his perception of Habermas' heuristic public sphere as rooted in this tradition, evidenced in a strong negative image of nationalism, particularly the 'bad nationalism' described by Calhoun as Nazi Germany and Slobodan Milosevic's Serb nationalism. Calhoun claims that Habermas thinks of nationalism as a 'moral mistake'. Individuals gain their voices through civil society groups, and ultimately through states actors. (Lizardo and Strand 2002) (Pels 2001). Roles for the State, civil society and the individual, and their relationship to each other, are fixed, like stars in the overhead sky. Thomas Hove, a specialist on Habermas' contemporary academic transitions, emphasizes Habermas' movement away from a strict sociological concept of the public sphere by combining the political, descriptive sociological concept, with the general (political/normative ideal). In the political sphere, the public sphere functions as a 'warning system and sounding board'. Habermas uses a division of the social world based on a Marxist depiction of the social system, state, economy and civil society, dating back to Hegel's philosophy of Right (1821).

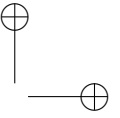
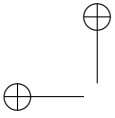
Civil society is described as an engine for bringing problems expressed in the political public sphere to the state, that sphere serving as a mediator, 'filter' or 'sluice' (schleub) between the state and the private sphere. Habermas indicates that the state has political power, not civil society nor individuals. Even the public sphere does not have political power. 'Voluntary unions' submit privately experienced problems to public sphere, in a formal communication. Hove observes changes in Habermas direction in 1975's legitimization crisis. Public sphere has changed, borrowing from Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann on relation of public sphere to political systems. While the social systems borrow from those, the three part model of political systems is from Marx's state, economy and civil society – macro social concepts – go back to Hegel.

Revolution is defined by Habermas as 'non-rational mob action'. Habermas claims communicative power – though weaker, can influence state officeholders by collectively binding political decisions. Role of media for Habermas is based on role of state, interaction of public sphere between social forces, limited role and capacity of individuals in public sphere, and revolution and public action viewed as 'anarchy'. In his collection of essays, 'The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory', is described as 'suggesting both constitutional limits to political loyalty and loyalty to the legally enacted constitution, emphasizing the procedural norms and the references for public discussion both coming from the constitution.'

## The idea of the global public sphere.

A primary challenges to the idea of the global public sphere is that there could be one. Scholars disagree on definitions and boundaries of the public sphere, there





is similar disagreement on the concept of a global public sphere, and even disagreement as to whether it exists at all or is still emerging. The immediate construct used by scholars, including Habermas himself, adapted the public sphere concept globally with the idea of counter-publics, exhibiting a rift between publics, and the need to create a theoretical concept that would explain interaction between groups in the alternate and dominant publics (Dahlgren, 1995; Curran 1996; Habermas, 1996; Baker, 2003; Frazer 2005).

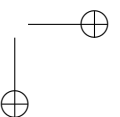
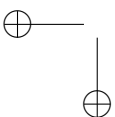
My rejoinder to those challenges is the construction of a globalization-friendly global public sphere. Communication scholars have set themselves to the task of correcting perceived shortcomings buried in Habermas' public sphere theory, particularly those shortcomings that would make it impossible to address the issues that have been laid out here: citizen participation, legitimacy and accountability. This section examines the work of these scholars, to conclude whether those issues have been successfully addressed.

Communications scholar Angela Crack suggests that the enabling conditions of domestic public spheres are being supplemented by transnational networks that provide the structural potential for extended forms of publicity. Public debate in the mass society was largely channeled through a limited range of media outlets, whereas cyberspace is an infinitely more heterogeneous discursive environment. The coherence of mass public spheres contrasts sharply with the Internet's hyperlinked, interactive structure, which creates a highly complex web of overlapping discussion forums on every conceivable topic. Network structures pervade all spheres of society, including politics, government, the economy, technology, and the community (van Dijk 2006). These processes symbolize a disruption in conventional understandings of space, borders, and territory, and free up space for new concepts for construction of a global public sphere to be considered.

### **Gadamer's radical strain: 'All who are free can never again be shaken'.**

Language, expressed as *dialogue* by Gadamer and as *deliberation* by Habermas, is recognized by them as common grounds for the medium of ethical life. Gadamer and Habermas shared a belief that ethical norms can be understood, justified, and criticized dialogically and discursively, and that ethical conflicts can be resolved in the same manner. This dialogue or deliberation that serves as a medium for ethical life is both an actual practice of reflection in which we are always already engaged, and an ideal to which the actual practice is already oriented (Kelly, 1988).

For Gadamer, solidarity is a form of ethical action. All ethical actions, whether individual or collective, are based on norms, and all valid norms are social in the



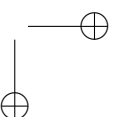
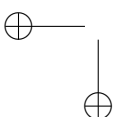


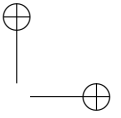
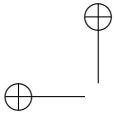
sense that they must be recognized as valid by other individuals. Solidarity is constituted by the set of ethical norms which other individuals validate, as norms they hold in common. Solidarity is a goal of ethical actions because it must be constantly reaffirmed and redefined. This constant reaffirmation and redefinition of solidarity is the necessary task of critical ethical reflection. The concept of solidarity can be further clarified in terms of Gadamer's concept of *die sache*. Gadamer argues that the goal of a dialogue is not to establish one participant's point of view as the only true one, but to come to some understanding between them concerning the *sache* or subject matter of the dialogue. It is this subject matter, not the participants or their viewpoints, which determines the structure and goal of the dialogue. For Gadamer, this process also determines truth of the dialogue, for the 'truth' is a result of a 'fusion of horizons' of the participants' viewpoints about the subject in question.

A critical way for Gadamer to express his hermeneutic view on understanding is his interpretation of concepts of praxis and phronesis, found originally in Aristotle. This is defined by some scholars as "a judgmental mediation between the universe and the particular where both are co-determined", leading to a strong desire to show continuity between past and present, and to connect the notion of solidarity with plurality. (Bernstein 1992) Others defined phronesis as a political type of judgment, enabling political actors to decide what course of actions to take. (Arendt 2008). Praxis, the other critical component of Gadamer's work, focuses on Gadamer's transformation of the notion of phronesis into his own concept of 'application'. This state where understanding is sought both out of the particular situation of an individual, and the horizon of others, is the attempt to achieve a "fusion of horizons" (*horizontverschmelzung*). For Gadamer (1980), these horizons were open and fluid, and he urged knowledge seekers "to let what is alienated by the character of the word or by the character of being distanced by cultural or historical distances speak again". After the publication of 'Truth and Method' (1965) Gadamer continued to explore themes of praxis, dialogue, and the "noble task and responsibility" of the citizen to make decisions for him or herself, rather than to rely on experts for a personal capacity that is part of one's moral being (Gadamer 1974, 1975, 1980)

Philosopher Richard Bernstein points out, in his reading of Gadamer's work, that there is a 'powerful latent radical strain' in Gadamer's thinking. He submits into evidence Gadamer's statements' genuine solidarity, authentic community, should be realized" and "practice is conducting oneself and acting in solidarity. Solidarity, however, is the decision condition and basis of all social reason" (Bernstein 1992; Gadamer 1975). Bernstein claims that Gadamer's hermeneutical project emphasizes the critical nature of being dialogical, and that this mode is not to be restricted to a few, as Aristotle intended, but is part of every person, and must be actualized.

This raises the concept that Gadamer's version of praxis can leverage greater effect on the global public sphere and on international governance legitimacy. Ethicist





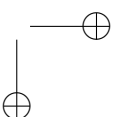
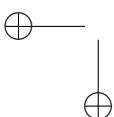
Joseph Monti argued for such a place for Gadamerian ethics in public policy, and by extension though the global public sphere, but he argued as well for ‘emancipation’. Though Gadamer did not describe in any systematic way the conditions creating necessary conditions for a public sphere, he did provide basic hermeneutic and linguistic clues to the shape of the necessary dialectic between participating and distancing—a description of the hermeneutic conditions of understanding that provide the dialogic form for coming to judgments about the true and the right in the social world, and the current organization of political structures. Monti also argued for ethical thought and practice that would lead to ‘emancipation’, because “without this normative guidance, a deluded decisionism overtakes the process of self-reflection and gives way to dogmatically issued instructions for action under the domination of experts over the legitimate praxis of free, responsibly autonomous citizens. Public policies formed in this way can be neither adequately verified nor legitimated; they will inevitable fail to be maintained unless enforced through the exercise of power” (Monti 1980).

### **A new heuristic model for global public sphere.**

The issues reviewed in this paper demonstrate the need for a new heuristic model for a global public sphere that will include new means of providing legitimacy and accountability. While Habermas’ heuristic global public sphere model rests on the state using communication as a means of forming public opinion, and for dialogue to act as a ‘safety hatch’, he clearly states that this does not equal political power. The Public opinion objective creates a certain kind of ethic, permits a certain kind of legitimacy.

This view is at odds with the definition of *phronesis* offered by Gadamer, and the application I propose for fusion of horizons to cross a variety of spaces. Despite the fact that the World Summit for the Information Society was held in Tunis, Tunisia in 2007, many organizations documented free speech violations even as the event was taking place. Local Tunisians were excluded from the forum process. In January 2011, a revolution took place, and Tunisians overthrew the national government. Despite the presence of national and global bureaucracies in the country, its citizens were ‘out of’ the public sphere of local and global decision-making, until the eruption of revolutions there, in Egypt, and other places. Egypt especially has changed the dynamics of communication and communicative power. Yet, a well-constructed global public sphere might have eliminated the need for street revolution by delivering real political, social and economic change. The global public

Instead, a confluence of events will generate ‘political will’ related to, what ought we to do. Pragmatic, ethical and moral forms of will... political will formation... situation in actors collectively engage in discourse to figure out and justify solutions to pragmatic, ethical and moral problems. The people of the Middle East consti-







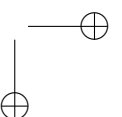
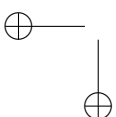
tute an informal global community in relation to the formal international community of non-government and civil society organizations, international organizations, and multinational corporations.

The importance of debate for determining validity of ideas. Is this amplified by the Internet and social media? Only to some extent, as these media can be still be controlled to some extent from outside forces. Even more so, it can be controlled by individuals participating in the dialogue, who can close out of or opt out of the conversation at will. Participants in both forums must have a willingness to hear one another, and an openness to differing opinions. The internet and social media will facilitate those who are open and willing to learn, but this quality cannot be substituted. Some present ideas without allowing others the opportunity to introduce new topics, points of view or ideas.

The fusion of horizons concept can also be used to embrace observations made in other disciplines, such as law and public policy. Implications of the reduced emphases on national sovereignty has led some legal experts to suggest a 'fusion of horizons' for the domestic and international, public and private realm in decision-making. Legal scholar Hari Osofsky (2008) is a proponent of ideas which have their root in thinking from the New Haven School movement (Falk 1995).

While not cast in the language of a global public sphere, Legal scholar Art Von Lehe further described the ongoing fusion of political horizons as global climate change is addressed by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), a local governmental international membership organization for sustainability and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as the representation of a number of Mayors at international climate change conferences. (Von Lehe 2008). These elected officials illustrate the reality that the global public sphere can be built along existing bridge between local municipalities, regional governmental organizations and international institutions, with some assurance of electoral accountability.

Despite the post-modern concerns that a global public sphere would create a sameness of political context, some global sphere scholars have found the opposite. Ingrid Volkmer discovered through her research that 'foreign' and 'domestic' news transnational channels and their 'particular political angle' reached the same audiences, whether they were in Germany, Turkey, Switzerland, Nigeria or Melbourne. The 'conventional parallelism' of these channels, described by Volkmer as transformed into a 'new worldwide 'trans local' political space, also eliminated the parallelism of multiple global public spaces into one 'new worldwide trans local political space. Rather than a horizontal set of separate structures, the technology produced a 'vertical structure' of global communication spheres, which provides the architecture for 'counter-publics' to exist. Scholars express the concept of 'multiple global public spheres', rather than one global sphere. This reality is further reproduced in the de-



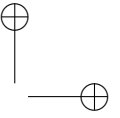
velopment of direct satellite broadcasting in the early 1980's and digital operations, which arguably contributed to the intersection of global and local communication spaces (Space 2003). Among these globalized satellite cultures are Al Jazeera, Zee TV, France 24, Arirang World, CCTV-9, Cubavision Internacional, and BBC World. This is referred to as a 'vertical structure' of global communication spheres, which provides the architecture for 'counter-publics' to exist. (Space 2003). Supplemented by an expansion of C-Span type programming to include increased coverage of global decision-making arenas, combined with the interactive capacities of social media, would go a long way toward making the construction of a globalization-friendly public sphere a reality.

## References

- ARENDT, Hannah. *Truth and Politics, in Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* (eds J. Medina and D. Wood), Ames, Iowa, Blackwell Publishing, USA, 2008.
- BAKER, Carol.E. *Media, Markets and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- BERNSTEIN, Richard J. *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991.
- CALHOUN, Craig. "Imagining solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, constitutional patriotism, and the public sphere", *Public Culture* 14 2002.
- CASTELLS, Manuel. 'Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society'. *International Journal of Communications* 1, 2007.
- CHANDLER, David. *Constructing global civil society: morality and power in international relations*. New York: Palgrave: 2004.
- COGBURN, Derrick L., Christiane M. Page', Sung-Un Yang. "Perceived Policy Power at the World Summit on the Information Society: How Epistemic Communities and Global Policy Networks Matter". Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Conference of the National Communication Association, 2008.
- COICAUD, Jean-Marc and Daniel Warner. *Ethics and International Affairs: Extent and Limits*. New York: United Nations University Press, 2001.
- CRACK, Angela M. 'Transcending Borders? Reassessing Public Spheres in a Networked World.' *Globalizations*, Vol. 4, No. 3., 2007.

- CURRAN, James. 'Mass Media and Democracy Revisited', in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds) *Mass Media and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London, 1996.
- DAHLGREN, Peter. *Television and the Public Sphere*. London: Arnold, 1995.
- FALK, Richard A. "Casting the Spell: The New Haven School of International Law". *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 104, No. 7, 1995.
- FRASER, Nancy. 'Critical Theory and the Containment of Radical Possibility'. *Theory Culture Society*, 26:61, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy," in Craig Calhoun (ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.
- GADAMER, Hans-Georg. "Was ist Praxis? Die Bedingungen gesellschaftlicher Vernunft." *Universitas* Heft 11: 1143-1158, 1974. (Re-printed as "What is Practice? The Conditions of Social Reason." In Gadamer), 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Hermeneutics and Social Science." *Cultural Hermeneutics* 2: 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Truth and Method*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Practical Philosophy as a Model of the Human Sciences." *Research in Phenomenology* 9: 1980.
- HAAS, Peter M., 'Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination', *International Organization*, 46: 1, 1992.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, 'The Legitimation Crisis'. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1989 [1962].
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press., 1996.
- HEGEL, George.W.F. *The Philosophy of history*. In S. Houlgate (ed.) *The Hegel Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1822/1999.
- HOVE, Thomas. *Media Power: Habermas's Late Public Sphere Theory*. Dissertation, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2007.
- KELLY, Michael. "Gadamer/Habermas debate revisited: the question of ethics." *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. 14: 1988.

- LIZARDO, Omar and Michael Strand. *Postmodernism and Globalization*. ProtoSociology 26: 2009.
- LUPEL, Adam. *The People and the Globe: Popular Sovereignty between Globalizing Present and Cosmopolitan future*. New York: New School for Social Research, 2008.
- LYNCH, Marc. 'Dialogue of Civilisations and International Public Spheres', Millennium: Journal of International Studies. 29, 2000.
- MARX, Karl. *The German ideology*. In D. McLellan (ed) Karl Marx: Selected Writings (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., pp. 171-174). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1846/2000.
- MONTI, Joseph Ernest. *Ethics and Public Policy: the conditions of public moral discourse*, Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981.
- NANZ, Patrizia and Jens Steffek. 'Global Governance, Participation and the Public Sphere'. Government and Opposition. 2004.
- OSMANI, Siddiqur. R. 'The impact of globalization on poverty in Bangladesh', Working Paper No. 65. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2006.
- OSOFKY, Hari M. *Geography of Climate Change Litigation Part II: Narratives of Massachusetts v. EPA*; 8 Chi. J. Int'l L. 573, 2008.
- PARSONS, Talcott . 'On the concept of political power,' in Sociological Theory and Modern Society. New York: Free Press: 1967.
- VAN DIJK, Jan. *The Network society: social aspects of new media*. Sage Publications, 2006.
- VOLKMER, Ingrid. 'The Global Network Society and the Global Public Sphere'. Development, Volume 46, No. 1, (8), 2003.
- VON LEHE, Art . *Climate Change and South Carolina's Economy*. 16 Southeastern Environmental Law Journal. 2008.



# The Meanings of Public Sphere: is there any democratic role for Internet?

João Carlos Correia

## Introduction

The concept of public sphere is being challenged by new interesting questions: what's the meaning of public sphere, today, in face of the changes introduced by Internet? Are those changes still compatible with the idea of publicity behind the conceptual classic models drawn by Habermas? Are still compatible with the strong notion and high normative demands that are implied in those models?

The aim of this text is to reflect on the connections among democratic deliberation and the role performed by online news media in a context of growing pluralism. In order to perform that reflection, we intend to develop a theoretical discussion on the limits of the classic concept of public sphere in face of the social *factum* consisting in the increasing fragmentation induced by digital media.

Today, most of political communication passes through expert communicators. This communicative division of labor threatens to undermine the quality of communication. Will the many-to-many communication possible with the Internet, helping to produce political situations in which communicative asymmetry can be mitigated, decreasing the gap between citizens and representatives?

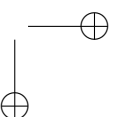
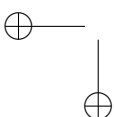
## Communication and models of democracy

The relationship between the citizen, the state and the public sphere is a basic theoretical consideration and this can be traced back to the earlier days of the press.

Behind different conceptions of democracy we may find different conceptions of media's political role. Authors such as Dahlberg (2001b) and Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White (2010) established a correspondence between normative thinking about the media's democratic potential and distinct models of democracy: the *liberal individualist*, the *communitarian* and the *deliberative*.

At the central core of liberal theories (Berlin, 1990; Nozick, 1974) is a common belief based on the assumption that mostly individuals are motivated by self-interest rather than any conception of common good. According Habermas (1996: 21), "*in the liberal or Lockean view, the democratic process accomplishes the task of programming the government in the interest of society, where the government is represented*

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 37-50



*as an apparatus of public administration, and society as a market-structured network of interactions among private persons.”*

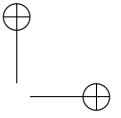
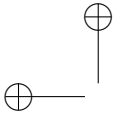
In some versions of the liberal individualism the identity between the public sphere and market goes even far. By conceiving democracy as a mechanism for choosing political elites in the competition between parties through voting, it equates to some extent, the political dynamics with the market game. Under this model, communication is primarily one-way, directed to obtain informational that allows to formulate a rational individual choice.

Communitarians such as MacIntyre and Charles Taylor argued that the standards of justice must be found in forms of life and traditions of particular societies and hence can vary from context to context (Taylor 1985; MacIntyre, 1978, 1988). Consequently, communitarians emphasize the power of media to reinforce existing community ties as well as establish new ones.

With similarities with communitarian perspective, republicanism shares with it the same emphasis on common good. For Habermas, (1996: 21) in this view politics is *“conceived as the reflective form of a substantial ethical life, namely as the medium in which the members of some how solitary communities become aware of their dependence on one another, acting as full deliberation as citizens, further shape and develop existing relations of reciprocal recognition into an association of free and consociates under law”*.

According to Clifford Christians (2004: 236; 247), the communitarian perspective challenges *“the dominance of Western individualist libertarianism as a workable philosophy of the press. In the communal worldview, the community is ontologically prior to persons.”* So, in the communitarian perspective, *“reporting must be grounded historically and biographically”*, and seek *“to open up public life in all its dynamic dimensions”*.

Finally, the concept of deliberative democracy implies a political process through which a group of people carefully examines a problem and arrives at a well-reasoned solution after a period of inclusive consideration of diverse points of view (Gastil, 2008). For the supporters of deliberative perspective several trends contributed recently to emphasize the need of rethinking the division between government and citizens, finding ways to strength the engagement of citizens in reflecting upon public problems and policies and carrying public action and participating in public dialogue. These trends include an increasing gap between citizens on one hand, and politicians, political parties and government on the other; the declining of citizen trust in governments; the declining party membership; the low rates of voting turnout in many countries and the growing sense of alienation of citizens with respect to democratic governance. *“Many new influences on democracy are the result of cognitive and communicative division of labor that are the inevitable structural consequences of technology, media and expertise”* (Bohman, 2000: 47). Simultaneously, a large



number of new initiatives, such as participatory budgets, citizen panels, deliberative polls, consensus conference have demonstrated the possibility and power of citizen engagement, participation, and even deliberation.

The discussion theory behind deliberative model implies a network of communicative processes, inside and outside of the parliamentary complex and its deliberative body, that sustain the existence of dialogic arenas where occur the formation of democratic opinion.

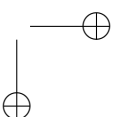
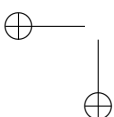
For the followers of the deliberative perspective “*rather to focus entirely on how to implement democracy in the nation-state, it is now more important to analyze how other institutions, such as the media, may affect the political discussions of political discussion, persuasion and communication*” (Bohman, 2000: 47).

## The concept and evolution of public Sphere

The notion of deliberative democracy generally refers to the need of to have a strong public informal public sphere that should optimally possess three characteristics:

1. the establishment of rational-critical argument (as opposed to social status) as the sole criterion by which public contributions should be judged;
2. circumscription of discussion topics to the “domain of “common concern”;
3. openness to all members of the public (cf. Habermas, 1989: 36)

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), Habermas builds his model of what he called the public sphere upon the development of the bourgeois society verified in Britain, France, and Germany in the late 18th and 19th century. Based on that context, he suggests that a space was then formed between the economy and polity where people could be informed and discuss, so as to form decisions and act upon them. Newspapers, books, salons and debating societies were the instruments of an arena relatively independent of the Church and the State, characterised by openness to all citizens, in the sense of the Enlightenment. As follows, he sees such a communicative forum as a model for a rational-critical debate amongst citizens, that accordingly ensures political will formation, and that is therefore crucial for the emergence of democracy. Since that earlier work, Habermas followed an anthropological turn focused on the reconstruction of universal conditions of mutual understanding, emphasising the political and ethical relevance of the use of language in everyday life-word. The essential elements of Habermas’s work started to increase their attention to the category of agreement as a model of coordination of social interaction and



to communicative rationality as an alternative to the instrumental rationality (see Habermas, 1987:57 -58). The use of language in order to achieve agreement with others was, from that time on, saw as its original use.

Communication appeared, finally, as the basis of the conditions of possibility of the fair acting which seems inevitably correlated with the growing development of the communicative competences. Among the structural elements of this theory emerge the rationally based consensus of normative kind obtained by the dialogical exchange of arguments between agents that would suspend its personal interests and social status (cf. Reh in Habermas, 1996: xv).

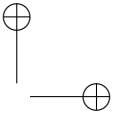
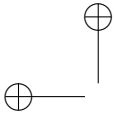
The category of rational consensus of normative kind would provided a critical dimension, claiming, as conditions of its accomplishment, for the absence of coercion and for the establishment of equalitarian conditions for public communication between social agents. The new paradigm of the rationality becomes not substantive but discursive: it is focused not it the content, but in the form of the argumentative procedures.

This whole argument followed a background of anthropological kind drawing the difference between strategic action and communicative action (see Habermas, 1987: 144). By omitting the sociological, cultural and historical components of his earlier work (1982), Habermas drew the communicational act in an idealistic way articulating it increasingly with the very evolution of civilization.

Previously, the unfinished project of modernity was described as a failure of bourgeois universalism. With the Theory of Communicative Action (1987), it will be linked to the achievement of individual and collective higher levels of communicative competence. Before, the distortion of communication patterns was located in the past history of individuals and communities, now it will be seen as being rooted in the inability of individuals and communities to acquire conditions enabling it to reach a new stadium (see Benhabib, 1994). Thus, *“the consensus demanded at discursive level, depends by one hand, of the irreplaceable ‘yes’ or ‘no’ of concrete individuals, and, by the other hand, of their ability to overcome their self-centred perspectives. (...) The method of discourse will cover the close relationship between the inalienable autonomy of individuals and its insertion into intersubjectively shared ways of life* (Habermas, 1999: 22).

Finally, Habermas argues that advanced capitalist society cannot be conceptualized as social totality, because it is split into separate realms integrated on different bases. Life-world is described as a linguistically organized stock of interpretative patterns which are largely implicit but necessary for the conduct of practical social interaction and communication (Habermas, 1987: 124: cit in Gardiner, 2004: 40). Is the realm of personal relationship and of communicative action. It is in life-world that people communicate with one another in a non-instrumentalist but intersubjective manner. Habermas idealizes the directly interpersonal relations of the life-world as





counterpoint to a system ordered on the basis of a non-linguistic steering media (money and power), integrating society impersonally through functional or cybernetic feedback. So, new social movements are interpreted of the advocates of a threatened life-world against colonization by the systemic forces of state and capital (cf. Calhoun, 1992: 30-31).

The processes of rationalization within the life-world are said to occur through communicative or through strategic action. The taking over of communicative imperatives by strategic imperatives leads to colonisation of the life-world.

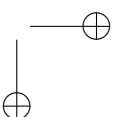
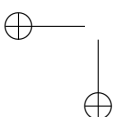
In its work on the philosophy of law, “Between Facts and Norms”, the unitarian concept of public sphere is replaced by a more pluralistic and multiform one: an highly differentiated network of local, regional, scientific, political public spheres where occur discursive processes of opinion formation and which main goal is the diffusion of information and knowledge. That plurality of public spheres doesn’t mean the absence of an overall public sphere in which all society creates self- reflexive knowledge about itself. The Habermasian conception of democratic deliberative politic is based in a dual model, which is connected with the will formation in the parliamentary complex but also with a concept of public sphere that is articulated with an spontaneous network of informal public spheres dialogically discursive and democratic. This means that the political system is now conceived as an open system that can be indirectly influenced by a public sphere that produces transparency. This means also the recognition of an ambivalent role to the media: if in 1962, media were the leading responsible for opacity and refeudalization of public sphere, now Habermas didn’t deny the ambivalence of media as social actors responsible by publicity and transparency.

## Media and Public sphere: The case against democratic of media

A set of different scientific disciplines explored the way as media might influence the political climate and the democratic process in modern democracies.

Of course a “public” should be conceptualized as something more than just a media audience, as a social reality existing as discursive interactional processes. However, in our complex and strongly mediated societies we have to accept as a fundamental element of contemporary public sphere the circulation of media messages in many contexts, from the most structured and larger public *fora* to the broader micro-contexts of everyday life.

The most important democratic functions that we can expect the media to serve are listed in a well known article by Gurevitch and Blumler (1995: 97). These functions include surveillance of socio-political developments, identifying the most rele-



vant issues, providing a platform for debate across a diverse range of views, holding officials to account for the way they exercise power, provide incentives for citizens to learn, choose, and become involved in the political process, and resist efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence.

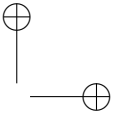
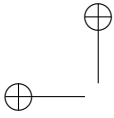
However, *“the communicative division of labour threatens to undermine the quality of communication and even to introduce distortions and manipulations, especially since the goals of mass media are typically not to democracy but rather to shape communication in order to achieve great market share or to further the goals of their paying customers”* (Bohman, 2000: 48).

There is a growing concern that the mass media are not fulfilling these functions properly:

a) The media industry by its nature is driven by economic rationality moving away from the civic requirements supported by advocates of deliberative democracy. Media have become increasingly commercial under the systemic imperatives of the global economy. De-regulation and privatization of public services and the increasing phenomena of infotainment are characteristics of the reality of the actual media system, disturbing its contribution for public democratic deliberation

b) Public sphere involves critical reflection and distance. The *media* increasingly call for participation and emotional involvement in a way that implies the generalization of spectacle. News is more entertaining than informing, offering mostly gossip, scandals, sex, and violence. Political news is more personalized than ever, focus about individuals and leaders than about their ideologies. As consequence of the market driven options and the dependence of political hierarchy, the media spend much of their time looking for scandals in the private lives of politicians and their families, but ignore much more serious consequences of their policies. While minor dangers are hysterically blown out of proportions, much more serious dangers in our society go largely unnoticed (Glassner, 1999; Bagdikian 1983; Fallows 1996; Capella and Jamieson 1997; Bennett and Entman 2001; Barnett 2002).

c) The mediated public sphere of communications it's under the attack of corporate money and power, even through systemic mechanisms that ensure that our leisure is confined to more and more spaces where commercial messages are the only ones permitted. In the absence of serious debate, voters are left with paid professional political propaganda containing only meaningless slogans making them disinterested and cynical about politics. Our ways of communicating are becoming colonized, trademarked and censored by the language of the “brand”, marking a climate of cultural and linguistic communication. Most of major media are often responsible for a generalization of a one-dimensional discourse, already analysed by classic thinkers such as Adorno or Walter Benjamin, Heidegger, Karl Kraus and George Orwell: «the language of total administration», the prominence of the illusion of a pure denotative language, a kind of closed discourse that it does not explain but simply broadcast



the social order, in a more or less subtle way. In cognitive terms, that language only expresses the intervention of technocracy as an intrusion of instrumental rationality at the most deep level of human consciousness, that is to say, the intromission of the systemic imperatives in the ordinary language.

d) Public opinion is formed largely within the confines of a prior selection of subjects of public attention. The task of setting the issues of public agenda is confiscated by politicians and the journalists of the major media. It makes sense to speak of a kind of censorship that is not performed on the communication but that comes itself from communication (see Rodrigues, 1985). We are facing the need of fighting for the freedom of expression against the power from major media groups and other primary definers to settle the public agenda.

e) There is still a strong dependence from primary definers and powerful source, who hold the power, define the relationship and ultimately the news agenda by controlling the access to and the flow of important information, building an hierarchy of credibility based on power, legitimacy and authoritativeness (cf. Phillips, 2010: 88).

f) In news discourse and practice, frames and tipifications are basic cognitive structures which guide the perception and representation of reality (Gittlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). The critical problem is that those artificial constructs may lead reporters to apply stereotypes, easy simplifications and incorrect labels.

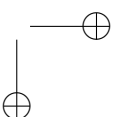
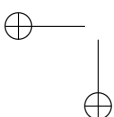
In spite of the accuracy of some of those critics, we stand that the communicative division of labor is demanded by social circumstances such as the complexity of problems and the size of the body of citizens. Some of these critics are accurate; others simply ignore the need of mediated communication in complex mass societies, downgrading the level of audiences to the status of a mass of cultural dopes. In spite of their pathologies, mediated communication makes rational publics possible.

## The online media as public sphere

Since the appearance of Internet, many authors stand that the new digital environment expands the realm for democratic participation and debate and creates new public spaces for political intervention, avoiding and overcoming the pathologies above referred.

Some authors stand that computers have produced new public spheres and spaces for information, debate, and participation that contain both the potential to invigorate democracy and to increase the dissemination of critical and progressive ideas (Kellner, 1998 apud Dahlberg 2001). The fear that the social asymmetries in communicative division of labor short-circuit the deliberation process strengthens the hope that the new communicative environment may help to surpass that threat.

Not surprisingly, the new social networks of the so called Web 2.0, similarly to what happened to previous online forums, were loaded with euphoric expectations



regarding the formation of a deliberative cyberdemocracy. Having in mind much of the available literature, we find a sincere hope in the renewal of a global public sphere built particularly by "the social spaces of Web 2.0, as exemplified by You Tube, MySpace, Facebook, and the growing blogosphere"(Castells, 2008). Simultaneously, we watch the presentation of a set of proposals seeking to overcome some of the pathologies related to the daily practice of journalism, trying to reconcile it with more inclusive social practices and democratic deliberation.

Accordingly to those approaches, new media born in the digital environment allowing a strong interactivity with publics and generating a new kind of public discussion, could overcome the dependence of economic and political systems, to open the public agenda to issues that we'll never find its way in traditional media, to be more attentive to alternative movements and social actors, to facilitate public dialogue among citizens and, finally, to avoid the stereotypization induced by mainstream media in the public communication

However, also many criticism has been launched against those hypothesis:

a) The supporters of phenomena such as civic and participatory journalism focus their critics in the journalistic professionalism avoiding identifying other mechanisms of power involved in the communicative process. The process of democratization of civil society remains confined to the replacement of journalistic elites identified as a major obstacle to citizen participation. The systemic dynamics of economic and political nature remain hidden. Consequently, there is a movement of dilution of journalistic professionalism which may lead to the abandonment of verification procedures.

b) In what concerns to the new interactive tools, first structural problem is related with the requirements of diversity and pluralism demanded by deliberative model and the fear that online forums and political discussions in social networks, far from encouraging reasonable dialogue over shared issues, merely encourages communication among very like-minded citizens.

Accordingly, the participation in social networks creates a sense of activity rather than genuine civic involvement, producing an overwhelming passivity in participants even while making them feel politically involved. This dysfunction will be aggravated by the fact that lack of face-to-face involvement generates a kind of pseudo-public, inconsequential, replacing a genuine commitment around public issues (Wilhelm, 1999; Sunstein, 2001).

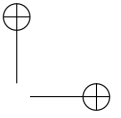
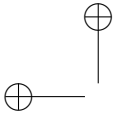
In response to this criticism, we think that, surpassed some strong exaggerations made during the early years of Internet, there are reasons to believe that formats such as online journalism, forums and social networks will help to achieve the balance between address to the highly heterogeneous audience and to treat issues that vary with the regard to the epistemic demands on speakers in diverse social and local contexts (cf. Bohman, 2000: 56).

Following the impulse of John Dewey, Bohman states that the main goal of a reformist democratic deliberative project will be to develop democratic modes of interaction between experts communicators and their audience in public sphere. The answer is not the a movement of dilution of journalistic professionalism, but the cooperation between experts in communication and ordinary citizens:

*“First, the public must challenge the credibility especially in their capacities to set agenda frames for discussing issues. Second (...) the public must challenge the reception by the media themselves, especially insofar as they may also report, represent and even define the «public opinion» of citizens who are stranger to each other” (Bohman, 2000: 56). So, “what is needed is a robust interaction between the audience of citizens and the professional media over the nature and character of public opinion and the power that media themselves exercise in virtue of defining this relationship and available forms and topics of communication (...) We may say that we are trading in a circle. In order of this ship to be possible, however, the public sphere must function well under the conditions of mediated communication, and the public sphere functions well only if there is a public with a robust sense of responsibility for sustaining the publicity of mediated communication” (Idem, ibidem).* It seems that Bohman wasn’t talking about digital media, citizen journalism, online founs. However, some of his remarks seems to fit well with some reflections on digital democracy.

Some authors have developed the inter-media agenda-setting hypothesis, trying to understand the mutual influence among media from several kind, showing a new kind of complementary phenomena with democratic potential. For instance, Campbell, Gibson, Gunbter and Touri (2010: 34-36.) deal, first, with online journalism under the point of view of the first level of agenda setting as news originator. In this sense, they stand that the classical question on “what media tell people to think” may be changed to “what the bloggers and activists using news websites tell media to focus”.

Accordingly with this hypothesis, if a critical number of elite blogs and web sites focus their attention on a particular story, it can attract the interest of mainstream media outlets. Prominent political report, opinion columnists and social activists from digital media indicate the consumption of blogs and news websites as a part of their routine information-gathering activities. In some circumstances, reporters and columnist are simultaneously also producers of blogs and participants and independent news sites. So, this kinds of formats can act as news resuscitator or re-framer of past news items. As news resuscitator, blogs and independent news websites, thanks to the connections between many journalists with them, may return to past news items. For instance, the blogs chatter may help to resuscitate or to keep an issue in the agenda. As re-framer, online media may influence the public’s understanding of the news allowing the promotion of alternative frames for news items already in the mainstream media agenda, adding commentary, analyses and discussions and becoming a part of the professional communication process inside mainstream media.



Besides that, everyday, community of bloggers, citizen journalists and commentators offer alternative interpretations of the day's events, and watch critically industrial news and other sources providing further related (and often contradicting) information enabling readers to better assess the accuracy of mainstream news stories.

Online media can work as a platform questioning the dominant media, asking them about their representations of issues of collective interest. This "journalism about journalism" contributes to reinvigorate the function of journalism in carrying on and amplifying public conversation of people on the criteria and practices of media system.

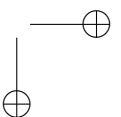
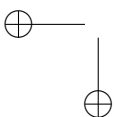
We stand that media channels open to diverse validity claims are still continuing to appear, avoiding an absolute reification of the structure of public communication. The appearance of new information channels that may be more sensitive to the pressures from new social movements will bring to light new validity claims excluded from public sphere. At least, some of this new experiences change in a significant way the agenda setting function, thanks to the impact produced in the traditional mass media. Also, some of them explicitly refuse to transform news in mere commodities and audiences in mere consumers.

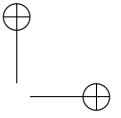
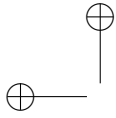
Finally, many of these experiences explicitly assume the critical interpellation of the role of media in complex and pluralistic societies, trying to prove that media should be more attentive to the representation of multiple life forms inhabiting life-world. We also stand that this hypothesis challenges the self-portrait of deliberative public sphere, with its trust in communicative rationality and in the strength of better argument.

Philosophically, we stand for a return to a social theory, with a global project oriented by principles that support a more comprehensive understanding of public life. At the level of public sphere, one must to accept the existence of subaltern counterpublics as parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs (cf. Frazer, 1992: 123). Insofar as these counterpublics emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics, they help to expand discursive space.

The theoretical solution to the social *factum* of fragmentation is to build an approach that have in account the multimodality of discursive practices within life world, and the large diversity of the public spheres. The really strength from deliberation will come from informal public spheres that bring to live, at least by some moments, the experience of freedom slowly introducing changes on institutional public deliberation.

What we do propose is that, instead of conceiving public sphere as only as a specific social domain marked by consensus, we also see it as marked by numerous





contradictions and by a considerable degree of heterogeneity, that's to say as a poly-dimensional reality, fluid and ambivalent.

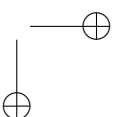
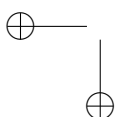
Rather than accepting a singular set of deliberative standards, several scholars, owing a insignificant debt to the work of Nancy Frazer, support the hypothesis that different kinds of public spheres exist (Cammaerts and Van Audenhove, 2005; Downey and Fenton, 2003; Jensen, 2003; Papacharissi, 2004).

So, a increasingly number of theorist who have applied Fraser's ideas stand that online discourse consists of several culturally fragmented cyberspheres that occupy a common virtual space, supporting the existence of plurality of rationalities inside the public sphere, avoiding privileging deliberation above other forms of discourse (Dahlgren, 2005).

So probably one must agree with Kellner assessment that the work of Habermas, an impeccable civic intellectual and philosopher that never run from debate of their own ideas, was undermined by too rigid categorical distinctions namely between liberal and contemporary public spheres, strategic and communicative actions, critical publicity and manipulative advertising. Public sphere must be the locus of consensus and public dialogue as much as the locus of the conflict, negotiation and fight for strategic gains. Some dualistic conceptions, even working as a conceptual and heuristic framework (as Habermas explained more than once), may acquire an idealistic configuration that doesn't work to the comprehensive understanding of the contemporary public spheres.

## References

- BAGDIKIAN, B. H. (1983) *The Media Monopoly*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- BARNETT, S (2002) «Will a Crisis in Journalism Provoke a Crisis in Democracy?». *The Political Quarterly* 73: 400-408
- BENNETT, W. L., Entman R. M. (Eds) (2001) *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*. Cambridge: University Press.
- BELL, D., (1993) *Communitarianism and Its Critics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- BENHABIB, S., (1992), *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- BENHABIB, S. (1994), «Modernity and the aporias of critical theory» in Jay Bernstein, Ed., *The Frankfurt School*. Vol. I. London, Routledge.
- BERLIN, I. (1990) *Four Essays on Liberty*. New York: Oxford University Press.

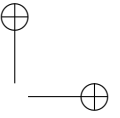
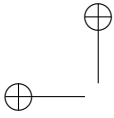


- BLUMER, J. and Gurevitch, M. (1995), *The Crisis of Public Communication*. London: Routledge.
- BOHMAN, J. (2000) «The Division of labor in democratic discourse: media, experts and deliberative democracy» in Simon Chambers and Annie Costain, Eds, *Deliberation, Democracy and the Media*. Boston and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers,
- CALHOUM, C. (1992), «Introduction: Habermas and the public sphere», in Craig Calhoun (Editor), *Habermas and Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press.
- CAMMAERTS B., VAN AUDENHOVE L. (2005) «Online political debate, unbounded citizenship, and the problematic nature of a transnational public sphere». *Political Communication* 22(2): 179–96.
- CAMPBELL, V., GIBSON, R., GUNBTER, B. and TOURI, M (2009) «New blogs, mainstream news and new agencies» in Garret Monaghan and Sean Tunney, «Web Journalism: a New Form of Citizenship». Sussex: Sussex Academic Press.
- CAPELLA J.N., JAMIESON K.H. (1997), *Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good*. Oxford University Press.
- CASTELLS, M. (2008) «The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance». *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 616 no. 1 78-93.
- CHRISTIANS. C. (2004), «Ubuntu and communitarianism in media ethics». *Ecquid Novi: South African Journal for Journalism Research* 25(2):235-256
- CHRISTIANS, C. (1999). «The common good as first principle» in Theodore Glasser, *The idea of public journalism*. New York: Guilford.
- CHRISTIANS, C.G., GLASSER, T.L., MCQUAIL, D., NORDENSTRENG K. & WHITE, R. A. (2009), *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press
- COHEN, Jean, & ARATO, Andrew (1992). *Civil society and political theory*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press.
- DAHLBERG L. (2001) «The internet and democratic discourse: Exploring the prospects of online deliberative forums extending the public sphere». *Information, Communication & Society* 4(4): 615–33.



- DAHLGREN P. (2005) «The internet, public spheres, and political communication: Dispersion and deliberation». *Political Communication* 22(2): 147–62.
- DOWNEY J., FENTON N. (2003), «New media, counter publicity and the public sphere». *New Media & Society*, 5(2): 185–202.
- FALLOWS J. (1996) *Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy*. Pantheon, New York
- FRASER, N. (1992), «Rethinking public sphere» in Craig Calhoun (Editor), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press.
- GASTIL, J., (2008), *Political Communication and Deliberation*. Sage Publications.
- GARDINER, M. (2004), «Wild publics and grotesque symposiums: Habermas and Bakhtin on dialogue, life word in public sphere» in Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts, *After Habermas: new perspectives on public sphere*. Blakwell Publishing.
- GLASSNER, B. (1999), *The Culture of Fear*. Basic Books. New York.
- HABERMAS, J. (1987), *Théorie de l'agir communicationnel*. 2 vols, Paris: Fayard.
- HABERMAS, J. (1999), *Comentários à ética do discurso*. Lisboa: Piaget.
- HABERMAS, J. (1996), «Three normative models of democracy,» in S. Benhabib, *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the boundaries of political*. Princeton University Press.
- HABERMAS J. (1989), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- HABERMAS J. (1996), *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- JENSEN J. (2003), «Public spheres on the internet: Anarchic or government-sponsored – a comparison». *Scandinavian Political Studies* 26(4): 349–74.
- MACINTYRE, A. (1991), «Letter». *The Responsive Community*, Summer 1991
- MACINTYRE, A. (1988), *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press
- MONHAGAN, G. and TUNNEY, S. (2009), «Introduction» in Garret Monhagan and Sean Tunney, *Web Journalism: A New Form of Citizenship*. Sussex: Sussex Academic Press.

- NOZICK R. (1974), *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books
- PAPACHARISSI Z. (2004) «Democracy online: Civility, politeness, and the democratic potential of online political discussion groups». *New Media & Society* 6(2): 259–83.
- PHILLIPS, A. (2010), «Old sources, new bottles» in Natalie Fenton, *New Media, Old Media: Journalism and democracy in the digital age*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage, pp. 87-61.
- RODRIGUES, Adriano Duarte (1985), «Figuras das máquinas censurantes modernas» . *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens* nº 1, As Máquinas censurantes modernas. Porto. Afrontamento.
- STRANDBERG, K. (2008), «Public deliberation goes on-line?». *Javnost – The Public* 15(1): 71–89.
- SUNSTEIN, C. (2001), *Republic .com*. Princeton University Pres.
- TAYLOR, C. (1985), *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- WILHELM, A. (1999) *Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges to Political Life in Cyberspace*. London: Routledge.



# Access to the Public Sphere and the Identity of the Subject of the French Nation.

Marion Dalibert

## Abstract

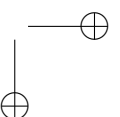
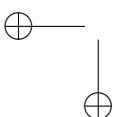
In this paper, I will discuss the access of two French social movements who represent ethno-racial minorities, struggle for visibility and make demands for recognition, to the global public sphere as it is materialized in mainstream French media. Using the Foucauldian notions of "power" (power aims not only to limit but also to change and guide the behaviour of individuals) and "subjection" (it is through being subjected to power that the subject is produced as such), I will demonstrate that subaltern social movements can reach the public sphere - understood as both a scene of appearance that is constitutive of social reality (Arendt 1994) and a space of public debate (Habermas 1997) - when the collective identity promoted by their members fits into the normative frameworks that define what and who counts as "human" in French imagined community. In other words, it is through the promotion of a heteronormative collective identity, one that is attached to a certain political system, i.e. the Republic, that subaltern social movements can reach social visibility, carry a legitimate speech and participate in the public debate. These protesting groups thus become an "effect" and a "relay" of power in the constitution of the identities of the mainstream media's "public", a "public" who is a member of the imagined community ("Us").

**Key words:** Public sphere, identity, subject, recognition, ethno-racial minorities

Access to the global public sphere, as it materializes in the mainstream media, is needed for a social movement to mobilize the public opinion so that the social problem it voices can be supported by the political sphere. Based on this observation, I want to demonstrate that the access of social movements that represent ethno-racial minorities to the public sphere depends on the collective identity they promote. I hypothesize that in order to gain access to the public sphere, protest groups are constrained to subject themselves to the discursive and identity norms prevailing in the imagined community of belonging.

According to Foucault (1975), subjection refers to a double process. It alludes to the submission of a subject to power and to the correlated constitution of the subject by that power. Power tries to modify, to guide, and to limit the conduct and actions of individuals. (Foucault, 1994a). To act upon the conduct of individuals and to

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices, 51-63*



tame bodies, disciplinary power uses techniques of surveillance and normalization. The "normalizing sanction" enables to discipline and produce individuals since individuals will be classified, hierarchized, and ranked according to what is considered "normal". If a deviation from the norm is detected, the individual will be punished in order to be corrected. This subjection to norms, values and rules occurs in any and every community that has a "code of conduct" (Foucault, 1994b). To avoid the risk of being disqualified, the subject must behave according to the prevailing norms, values and rules in a socio-historically situated society. By subjecting him- or herself to the code of conduct of a community, the individual will constitute him- or herself as a "moral" subject (ibid.: 1374). But first and foremost, s/he will recognize him-/herself as a moral subject and s/he will tend to adjust, modify, and/or alter his/her actions and conduct in order to maintain his/her "status" of moral subject – primarily for him-/herself. The individual will thereby become "subject".

By studying the media coverage of two French social movements that represent ethno-racial minorities and that have fought for visibility, I will show that it is by promoting a collective identity that echoes that of the "subject of the French nation", namely, the identity of the "model citizen" of the French community, that protest groups can access the global public sphere. They can thus become socially visible and carry a legitimate speech or one that is recognized as worthy of value.

The two social movements that I have studied are *Ni putes ni soumises* [Neither whores nor submissive], a movement that has gained access to the public sphere, and the *Mouvement des Indigènes de la République* [the Movement of the Indigenous of the Republic] that, even though it was covered by the media, has not been socially visible and that could not have a legitimate voice. My research is situated in a constructivist approach to discourse analysis and combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. My corpus is composed of two sub-corpus. The first is dedicated to NPNS and includes every article published in the daily national press of reference (*Le Figaro*, *Le Monde* and *Liberation*) as well as every subject broadcast in the television news of TF1, France 2 and France 3 from the birth of the movement (January 2002) until its access to the public sphere in March 2003. The second is devoted to the MIR (and constructed in the same way as NPNS' subcorpus) from its creation in January 2005 until the last articles published on the movement in May 2006.

## Struggle for visibility and social recognition

*Ni putes ni soumises* (NPNS) and the *Mouvement des Indigènes de la République* (MIR) are two social movements that each carry the definition of a social problem. For NPNS, it is the question of sexist violence against women of immigrant origin

who live in the French suburbs<sup>1</sup>. The MIR, on the other hand, denounces the discriminations suffered by people of immigrant origin – particularly from former French colonies – discriminations that are caused, according to this protest group, by the colonial ideology that persists in French society.

A social movement is created because it carries the definition of a social problem, and its objective is to get answers from the political sphere for this problem to be solved. Hence, the movement has to make its cause public so that it reaches the political agenda. Indeed, when a cause "becomes a focus of public attention" (Neveu & Quéré, 1996: 12) and is supported by the public opinion, the political sphere can hardly omit to take it into account. However, for a social movement to become the object of public attention, it needs to gain access to public arenas with large audience. Therefore, to become "public", a societal problem has to gain access to the "global" and national public sphere (Fraser, 2001: 138) as it is materialized by the main(stream) media: protest groups must then get substantial and advantageous media coverage, the media acting as a bridge between social movements and the political sphere (Neveu, 1999). But gaining access to the media for a social movement is far from easy and is generally the object of a real struggle. Protest groups have to fight and implement strategies for achieving some media exposure (Molotch & Lester, 1996). NPNS and the MIR have used equivalent strategies, of which the main ones were launching a petition and organizing a demonstration.

In addition to making a claim for reparation for the prejudice the people they represent suffered, these two movements claim access to "visibility" as a social group whose members share common identity attributes. Any social movement must indeed have a visible and recognizable identity by and for a public: the claims held by a protest group are those of particular individuals who form a group because they share one or more identity attributes and because they are fighting in the name of these attributes. It is as women of immigrant origin (ethno-racial and gender identity attributes) and as representative of this social group that NPNS, by raising the issue of the sexist violence suffered by women in the suburbs, demands visibility and reparation. And it is as men and women of immigrant origin (ethno-racial identity attribute) and as representative of this group that the MIR, by denouncing the discriminations against people from postcolonial immigration, formulates the same claims. The MIR and NPNS have been engaged in a struggle for "visibility" (Voirol, 2005). Moreover, they have also reported the invisibility or the "bad" visibility they consider themselves victims of. Indeed, from its creation onward, NPNS has claimed access to social visibility as women whose cultural background is "marked" (Brekhus, 2005), thereby implying that they were previously invisible in the public sphere. Meanwhile, the MIR has not made direct claims for public visibility as a social group but hopes

<sup>1</sup>In France, the suburbs are associated, in social representations, with immigration (Boyer & Lochard, 1998).

for "another" visibility to be given to ethno-racial minorities since the MIR members judge media discourses on minorities to be very stigmatizing. As they request access to visibility, these protest groups actually formulate demands for recognition.

For Honneth, all protest movements that are fighting for a cause are also struggling for social recognition (Honneth, 2007a). However, recognition is always a normative act. "Recognizing" an individual (or a social group) is to assign him/her/it a social value and to signify it to this individual or social group (Honneth, 2007b, 2006). But we do not recognize everybody as "worthy of value." The act of recognition occurs when the recognized individual or group shares with the recognizing person the same system of values and norms. So, when we recognize an individual, we signify him/her that s/he is a member of our community – "community" referring to the French imagined community (Anderson, 2002), which constitutes an "Us", with its socio-cultural heritage, norms, values, beliefs, and collective identity.

For Butler, it is the norms and values of a socio-historically situated society that govern social recognition and the lives that will be considered "human" (Butler, 2004a, 2004b). Indeed, for her, norms of recognition are productive because they help define whether an individual will be considered "human", "less than human", or "not human": "norms of recognition function to produce and to reproduce the notion of the human" (Butler, 2004a: 31-32). We recognize a person as "human" when s/he fits the frame of what is considered human in our society of belonging. Identity attributes (and their entwinement), such as race, gender or class, are evaluation categories that define what is considered "human" in a community. The MIR and NPNS, by bearing the marked ethno-racial identity attribute (interwoven with gender for NPNS), constitute ipso facto some "subaltern counter-publics" (Fraser, 2001: 138) and have constrained access to the French global public sphere, the latter being advantageous for "dominant groups" (ibid.) such as white middle-class men.

## Access to the public sphere and the subject of the nation

One way of denying recognition to an individual in intersubjective relations is to behave as if this physically present individual was in fact not: s/he is therefore socially invisible (Honneth, 2006). For Butler, people who suffer from social invisibility are not considered human: they are unintelligible and unreal. This observation is also corroborated by Arendt for whom to be invisible means not to appear to others: when one cannot "be seen and heard by all", s/he is deprived of reality (Arendt, 1994: 59-121). The reality of the world is constituted by what is revealed in a space of appearance that constitutes the public domain. Not to be "worthy" of being visible in a scene of appearance deprives us of the relation with others. This means that our actions do not matter and makes us somebody who is not human. In fact, the space of appearance that enables one to be seen by all members of a society is, in

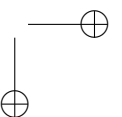
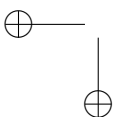


## Access to the Public Sphere and the Identity of the Subject of the French Nation. 55

our contemporary society, materialized by the mainstream media (Thomson, 2005). Therefore not to be recognized as worthy of value is not to have access to the public sphere. The public sphere is a scene of appearance that allows to be visible to any one in a community but not only. It is also an area of discussion, of debate, that is, of public formulation and confrontation of opinions (Habermas, 1997). Furthermore, social movements may appear in the public sphere but not be heard: if the discourses of protest groups are not credited with social value, they will be inaudible. They will not participate in public debates and will not be able to formulate an opinion in their name (Spivak, 2009). Another way of denying recognition to an individual in the public sphere is to make him/her visible, but to represent him/her in a negative way and to exclude him/her from "Us." To paraphrase Butler (2004a: 46), the norms of recognition produce and reproduce the notions of the "Same" (or "Us") and the "Other", the one who is different and excluded from "Us", i.e. "Them" (Berting, 2001). By not sharing *our* standards and *our* values, the "Other" is not recognized as worthy of esteem. The media are places where recognition is granted (Voirol, 2005): they participate in the construction of individuals or social groups that can be made visible as "Others" or as members of the community.

Indeed, the public sphere is also a sphere of circulation of representations and of construction of meaning (Charaudeau, 1999). The discourses that circulate in the public sphere carry meanings, values, beliefs, and norms that are proper to a community. And the media, by definition, are circulating these discourses: they are "signifying agents" (Hall, 2007: 91). Media discourses hold the representation of what "we" are, the behavioral norms that we must follow and the values by which we must abide. The media (and the information discourse) participate in the circulation of society's "moral code" and thus in the subjection and normalization of the individuals. The media recognize "the normal" as worthy of esteem and disqualify deviance (Becker, 1985). Therefore, we can say that within the media discourse there is the definition, or the definitions, of the subject of the French nation, that is to say that within the facts, the "events" or the social movements made visible in the media, the figure of the "good" subject of the nation implicitly emerges. It is a kind of model citizen who corresponds to the normative definition of the human and who thus occupies the position of the "neutral" or the "unmarked", but against whom all deviations are measured. In the media, the "bad" subjects, the "less than human" who are excluded from the French imagined community are also represented. These "bad" subjects are disqualified and represent for the media's publics "what they should not do" and "what they should not be"<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, a social movement that gains access to the public sphere, namely, that is socially visible and involved in public debates, is credited with

<sup>2</sup> I do not share the behavioralist or positivist conception of the power of the media. For me, media discourses do indeed have social effects, but the media sphere does not exert a unilateral and violent "power" over individuals. Furthermore, I defend the idea that subjects have agency.



social esteem because it coincides with the "subject of the French nation." Conversely, if recognition is denied to a social movement, it will be socially invisible and/or represented as "Other" or as a "bad subject", and its speech will be inaudible.

In my research, only NPNS has gained access to the public sphere and achieved social visibility.

From a methodological point of view, I will maintain that a social movement has reached social visibility when it is "promoted to the rank of event" (Krieg, 1996: 114-115) in the mainstream media. According to Neveu and Quéré (1996: 12), an occurrence becomes an event when it "is granted a certain relevance, value, importance, from a certain perspective, and becomes the focus of public attention." To determine whether or not the MIR and NPNS have been "promoted to the rank of event", I studied their process of becoming-event in order to observe at which period(s) each movement has been the most covered and valorized in the media<sup>3</sup>.

The MIR has not been promoted to the rank of event and its cause has not entered the political agenda. From January 2005 until May 2006, 37 articles and 2 TV news briefs were devoted to the movement but it has never gained in "value" and "significance" in the media nor become a focus of public attention. The media coverage was insufficient and too sporadic to enable the movement to achieve social visibility. Firstly, the movement has been invisible on television (only TF1 dedicated a news brief to it in May 2005 and May 2006). Secondly, it has been irregularly covered by the press and unevenly from newspaper to newspaper (Le Figaro, for example, devoted it only two articles). The MIR has mainly been given press and promoted in Le Monde (25 articles have been dedicated to it, among which several were positioned in front page) but this valorization by only one newspaper was not enough for the movement to attain the status of media event.

In contrast, NPNS has become an "event" in the media and has had its cause enter the political agenda<sup>4</sup>, but only 15 months after its initial activities and the publication of the first articles. From January to December 2002, the media coverage of NPNS was extremely low and irregular. It is from January 31, 2003, namely the launch of the "March of the women from the suburbs for equality and against ghettos" ["Marche des femmes des quartiers pour l'égalité et contre les ghettos"], that media coverage has increased. From January to March 2003, 25 articles were published and 15 TV news' subjects were dedicated to it. NPNS was also promoted to the rank of event during International Women's Day on March 8, 2003: 15 articles were published,

<sup>3</sup> To do this, I counted the number of articles and excerpts from TV news devoted per month (for every newspaper and TV channel) to each movement, as well as assessed their "size" (in terms of number of words for the press and number of seconds for television). I undertook the same type of counting with regard to the genre of the articles and subjects of TV news, with regard to the section setting and to the positioning in front page for the press and in the headlines for television.

<sup>4</sup> The then Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin received the members of the movement in the morning of March 8, 2003 and pledged to implement some measures.



9 TV news' subjects were broadcast, and the movement was highly valued in the newspapers (the articles or the TV news' subjects were positioned in front page or in headlines).

Unlike the MIR, NPNS has achieved social visibility and has been able to carry the definition of a social problem. This differential distribution of social recognition was determined by the collective identity each movement promoted and by the entities they designated as their opponent.

The distribution of social recognition, and thus the access to the global public sphere, is conditioned by the collective identity promoted by the protest groups. Indeed, to mobilize public opinion, the MIR and NPNS wish for their media coverage to be substantial and valorizing. Such valorization materializes in the construction of the collective identity of the protest groups' members in the media (Neveu, 1999). However, only the collective identities promoted by social movements that respond to the shared norms and values of an imagined community have their access to the global public sphere facilitated (Passy & Giugni, 2005). Therefore, the MIR and NPNS's members have an interest in promoting a collective identity that echoes that of the French nation. Social movements are at constant risk of being devalued and pejoratively represented in the public sphere. Indeed, when a protest group has gained access to the media, the group's collective identity that is staged in the media discourses may not correspond to that promoted by the movement. This "collective identity" that I will call the "socio-discursive identity" is understood as the product of the "acts of identification" and "categorization" (Brubaker, 2001: 75-77) that are staged in the media discourses and carried out by journalists, the social movement, and social actors who are neither journalists nor members of the movement but who have spoken in the media.

## Ni putes ni soumises: "Us"

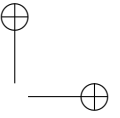
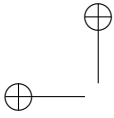
NPNS identified with an "Us" and accused the state (namely, a political entity) to be responsible for sexist violence through the abandonment in poverty and exclusion of the people living in the suburbs. But in saying what they are not, "Neither whores nor submissive" is the name of the movement through which women of immigrant origin designate and name themselves. The words "whores" and "submissive" are terms that are sociologically marked and that indicate deviance from the norm. By signifying that women of immigrant origin are neither *whores* nor *submissive*, they signal that they neither have deviant sexual practices nor are "dominated" by male individuals. Via the name given to the movement, NPNS's members indicate they are situated in the middle of these two deviances: they "categorize" themselves within the norm, in the position of the "unmarked". Indeed, "woman" is now regarded as free, independent and emancipated. Her image is no longer that of a woman submitted to

male individuals. NPNS members thus want to be recognized in the public sphere as being in line with the norms applying to the feminine gender in French society (namely white femininity). In their claims, they denounce the violence they suffer and that prevent them from performing daily white femininity, i.e. the norm of gender based on a (Western) ideal that does not exist (Butler, 1999). As such, NPNS self-identified with an "Us" and has been recognized as having social value.

NPNS became an event in the media when the movement slightly changed its collective identity and promoted the figure of "the young women from immigrant origin" ["la jeune fille issue de l'immigration"] as a typical member of the movement, whereas before every generation of women was represented. Promoting a group composed of "young women" has – partly – enabled – the movement to be strongly covered by journalists. A news article does not represent reality but a social construction of reality: journalists have some social representations that guide (in an unconscious way) the redaction of a newspaper article or the production of a TV news' reportage – representations which allow to render intelligible a fact that occurs in the world (Delforce, 1996). These representations are carried by discourse(s). The discourses that circulate in the public sphere, what I will call the "social discourses", correspond to "frames of interpretation of the world" (Delforce & Noyer, 1999: 21, my translation) and feed off preceding discourses (Paveau, 2006). As it foregrounds the movement as a movement of "young women from immigrant origin" NPNS echoes the 1970s feminist movements that were composed of young women who were fighting for emancipation: the movement has hence made "sense" for the journalists.

The socio-discursive identity<sup>5</sup> of NPNS members, as it is staged in the media, has been embodied in the collective figure of the "young woman from the suburbs" [la "jeune filles des banlieues"]. This figure has been staged in the media as fighting for achieving Western societies' feminine gender norm. "The young woman from the suburbs" has been represented as submitted to Islam, to her brother (the figure of the "young man from the suburbs" [le "jeune garçon des banlieues"])), and to her parents who force her to remain cloistered at home. She is a "prey" for boys of her age and compelled to wear the hijab or to adopt masculine attitudes to protect herself from young men's sexual demands. She risks forced marriage and must preserve her virginity at all costs. The young woman from the suburbs is constructed as submissive:

<sup>5</sup> To study the socio-discursive identity of NPNS (and the MIR) members, I analyzed the definitional and designational paradigms (Mortureux, 1993: 118) of the movement's members in my corpus' articles and subjects of TV news. In this endeavor, I identified all the syntagmas of designation and all the periphrases of definition that have been used to designate and define the movements' members. Then, I made a qualitative analysis of each protest group's socio-discursive identity.



she is represented as deviant vis-à-vis feminine gender norms<sup>6</sup>. But with NPNS, this figure fights for becoming "free and emancipated", for her right to live like all French female citizens and to perform white femininity. Many journalistic genres (portrait, reportage, investigation, and especially "testimony"<sup>7</sup>) have helped to draw this figure. Journalists interviewed in the outskirts of Paris some "young women", namely some "witnesses" (who can be replaced by any other "witness"), who have served as "subjects of theoretical enunciation" (Jost, 2003: 65).

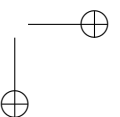
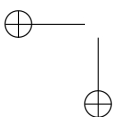
In the media coverage of the movement, "the young woman from the suburbs" has been opposed to other figures representing ethno-racial minorities that have been constructed as deviant with respect to gender norms. Firstly, in the media, the movement has not been opposed to the state but to the figure of the "young man from the suburbs", who has been staged as an oppressor, as a violent macho, and as a sexual predator, that is, as being virilist. Other figures were also opposed to the "young woman from the suburbs" but to a smaller extent: the "veiled young woman" [la "jeune fille voilée"] represented as submitted to Islam and men, as indoctrinated but not aware of it, the "immigrant mother" staged as submitted to Islam and her husband, and as complicit in young women's oppression. These figures have been constructed as "Other" and excluded from the French nation. They have been othered through their representation as being deviant vis-à-vis Western society's gender norms, whereas the "young woman from the suburbs" has been recognized worthy of esteem and member of the "Us" through her fight for being able to live according to the prevailing gender norms.

## The Mouvement des Indigènes de la République: the "Other"

The MIR, in contrast, has promoted a differentialist identity. The members of the movement named themselves as colonized people were called at the time of the French colonial empire. In this period of history, the colonies' indigenous [native] people were excluded from the community of French citizens and considered as "Others". For the colonizers (and the entire nation), the indigenous was inferior to them: s/he was a "subhuman" who had to be civilized. The MIR, by naming (and

<sup>6</sup> To illustrate this, here is one excerpt of an article published in the press: "On them [the young women from the suburbs], the ghetto puts constant pressure, which forces them to expend a crazy amount of energy to protect themselves, to pay constant attention to their reputation. No slackening moment is possible. It starts with clothing, the chunky sweater that is only taken away once we arrived at school. To wear a skirt, a low neckline, make-up is immediately risking being called a "whore" or a "slut". "(Le Monde, 25/10/2002: 11).

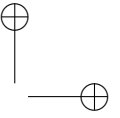
<sup>7</sup> Testimonies are articles or television reportages that are constructed from the "testimony" of individuals on their daily lives or at some point in their lives, and refer to the intimate.



defining) itself as "the Indigenous of the Republic", has constructed and promoted a collective identity that stages the otherness that people from immigrant origin are victims of and that the MIR denounces. According to the MIR, people bearing the stigma of origin are considered as "Others" vis-à-vis the members of French society. By calling itself "the Indigenous of the Republic", the movement defines itself as "Other" with regard to French citizens. This differentiation between the MIR and French citizens is also reflected in the designation of who is responsible. For the MIR, it is the French nation – both a *political unit* (the state) and the *community of citizens* (Schnapper, 2003) – that is responsible for discriminations. Therefore, even though it never formulates it, the MIR is in "opposition" with the members of French society, members who share the same collective identity. In France, this collective identity (which is constructed and has no "essence") expresses itself in a strong attachment to the Republic and its values (ibid.), especially the "principle of equality" between all citizens, the "memory of the Revolution" and the principle of secularism [*laïcité*] that separates the religious from the political domain (Weil, 2011). Moreover, through the name given to the movement, the MIR condemns the discriminatory character of the Republic while the latter is supposed to guarantee equality of and for all. Hence, by denouncing this, it also incriminates French citizens (by the definition of their collective identity) as being discriminating. The MIR members therefore oppose an "Us" and this opposition has largely contributed to recognition being denied to them in the media.

In their discursive productions, the members of the MIR define themselves as people of immigrant origin. However, the group's socio-discursive identity as it has been staged in the media has not constructed the members of the MIR as people of immigrant origin but as "extremely left-wing Islamists who are hostile to secularism [*laïcité*]." <sup>8</sup> This discursive identity, largely constructed by journalists and social actors other than journalists (the group's spokespersons have rarely been questioned), has led to the undervaluation, in the media, of the social group represented by the movement: they are a (deviant) "minority" among the "people of immigrant origin". In the media coverage of the MIR, never have people of immigrant origin testified or been transformed into subjects of theoretical enunciation as it has been the case for NPNS: no "figure" has emerged. The movement and its cause have rather been discussed and debated in Op-Eds. The members of the MIR have been constructed in the media as a threat to republican values: they have been othered. Represented as "Islamists", that is, as "extremist" individuals wishing Islam to be at the heart of a political project, the members of the MIR have been constructed as opposed to the value of secularism [*laïcité*], but also to that of equality insofar as "Islamism" is sy-

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, many syntagmas used to define the members of the movement represent them as radical Muslims of the extreme left (or even anti-Semitic): "*the proponents of a radical and political Islam, activists complacent with regard to political Islam, Trotskyists, known activists of pro-Palestinian or anti-Semitic extremism,...*."



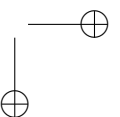
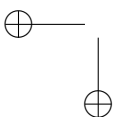
nonymous with the domination of women. By incriminating the Republic and French citizens as discriminating, by failing to designate an "Other", one who does not respect the value of equality, as the responsible of discrimination (extreme-right voters, rogue employers, etc.), the members of the MIR have been invisibilized and othered in the media, which has contributed to discredit the movement and its claims in the public opinion.

## Conclusion.

In France, to be recognized as worthy of value and to gain access to the global public sphere, as it materializes in the mainstream media, a social movement has to promote an identity that corresponds to the "Subject of the French Nation", that is to say a normative gender identity and/or one that is attached to the Republican regime. The social movements that gain access to the public sphere by promoting such identity become a site and a "relay" of power (Foucault, 1994c: 180) vis-à-vis the "publics" of the information media ("publics" who are members of an "Us") insofar as they contribute to establish the norms of recognition that produce what will be considered as a human life worthy of value, and thus contribute to subject the public of mainstream media to a code of conduct. The power or the norms by which a subject can be recognized (or by which the public of the media should abide in order to avoid being disqualified in the social world) are reiterated. It is the repetition of the norms of recognition of which the subject is the relay that perpetuates power (Butler, 1997: 16). Conversely, if a protest group (or an individual) promotes an identity that does not correspond to the shared one in the imagined community and/or that holds an unspeakable speech, it might not gain access to social visibility or might be represented as "less than human." One can also wonder if a "struggle for recognition" (Honneth, 2007b) set out by ethno-racial social movements and which would aim to broaden the norms of recognition is possible in the global public sphere. Furthermore, we may add that to risk being qualified as an "Islamist" (or othered) in the mainstream media depending on the speech one carries, reshapes the public sphere itself in the sense that all discourse cannot be made visible in the media and socially: "these threats [being qualified as Islamist] *decide* the defining limits of the public sphere through setting limits on the speakable. The world of public discourse, in other words, will be that space and time from which those critical perspectives will be excluded." (Butler, 2004b: 127).

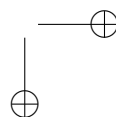
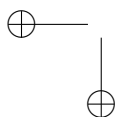
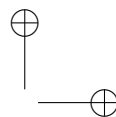
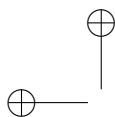
## References

ANDERSON, Benedict, *L'imaginaire national*, Paris, La Découverte, 2002



- ARENDT, Hannah, *Condition de l'homme moderne*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1994.
- BECKER, Howard, *Outsiders*, Paris, Ed. A.-M. Métailié, 1985.
- BERTING, Jan, « Identités collectives et images de l'autre: les pièges de la pensée collectiviste » in *Hermès* n°30, 2001. p.41-58.
- BOYER, Henri, LOCHARD, Guy, *Scènes de télévision en banlieues 1950-1994*, Paris, INA/L'Harmattan, 1998.
- BREKHUS, Wayne, « Une sociologie de l'"invisibilité": réorienter notre regard » in *Réseaux* n°129-130, 2005. p. 243-272.
- BRUBAKER, Rogers, « Au-delà de l'"identité" » in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* n°139, 2001. p.66-85.
- BUTLER, Judith, *The Psychic Life of Power*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997.
- BUTLER, Judith, *Gender Trouble*, London and New-York, Routledge, 1999.
- BUTLER, Judith, *Undoing Gender*, London and New-York, Routledge, 2004a.
- BUTLER, Judith, *Precarious Life*, London and New York, Verso, 2004b.
- CHARAUDEAU, Patrick, « La médiatisation de l'espace public comme phénomène de fragmentation » in *Etudes de Communication* n°22, 1999. p.73-92.
- DELFORCE, Bernard : « la responsabilité sociale du journaliste: donner du sens » in *Les Cahiers du journalisme* n°2, 1996. p. 16-32.
- DELFORCE, Bernard, NOYER, Jacques, « Pour une approche interdisciplinaire des phénomènes de médiatisation: constructivisme et discursivité sociale » in *Etudes de Communication* n°22, 1999. p.13-39.
- FOUCAULT, Michel, *Surveiller et punir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975.
- FOUCAULT, Michel, « Le sujet et le pouvoir » in *Dits et écrits II: 1976-1988*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994a. p.1041-1062.
- FOUCAULT, Michel, « Usage des plaisirs et techniques de soi » in *Dits et écrits II: 1976-1988*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994b. p. 1358-1380.
- FOUCAULT, Michel, « Cours du 14 janvier 1976 » in *Dits et écrits II: 1976-1988*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994c. p.175-189.

- FRASER, Nancy, « Repenser la sphère publique : une contribution à la critique de la démocratie telle qu'elle existe réellement » in *Hermès* n°31, 2001. p. 125-156.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *L'espace public*, Paris, Payot & Rivages, 1997.
- HALL, Stuart, *Identités et cultures*, Paris, Editions Amsterdam, 2007.
- HONNETH, Axel, *La société du mépris*, Paris, La Découverte, 2006.
- HONNETH, Axel, « Le motif de tout conflit est une attente de reconnaissance » in *Mouvements* n°49, 2007a. p. 145-152.
- HONNETH, Axel, *La lutte pour la reconnaissance*, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 2007b.
- JOST, François, *La télévision du quotidien*, Bruxelles, De Boeck, 2003.
- KRIEG, Alice, « "La purification ethnique" dans la presse. Avènement et propagation d'une formule » in *Mots* n°47 1996. p.109-125.
- MOLOTCH, Harvey, LESTER Marilyn, « Informer : une conduite délibérée de l'usage stratégique des événements » in *Réseaux* n°75, 1996. p.23-41.
- MORTUREUX, Marie-Françoise, « Paradigmes désignationnels » in *Semen* n°8, 1993. p. 117-136.
- NEVEU, Erik, « Médias, mouvements sociaux, espaces publics » in *Réseaux* n°98, 1999. p. 17-85.
- NEVEU, Erik, QUÉRÉ, Louis, « Présentation. Le temps de l'événement. » in *Réseaux* n°75, 1996. p.5-21.
- PASSY, Florence, GIUGNI, Marco, « Récits, imaginaires collectifs et formes d'action protestataire. Une approche constructiviste de la contestation antiraciste » in *Revue française de science politique* n°55, 2005. p. 889-918.
- PAVEAU, Marie-Anne, *Les prédiscours*, Paris, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2006.
- SCHNAPPER, Dominique, *La communauté des citoyens*, Paris, Gallimard, 2003.
- SPIVAK, Chakravorty, *Les subalternes peuvent-elles parler ?* Paris, Editions Amsterdam, 2009.
- THOMPSON, John, « La nouvelle visibilité » in *Réseaux* n°129-130, 2005. p.59-87.
- VOIROL, Olivier, « Les luttes pour la visibilité. Esquisse d'une problématique » in *Réseaux* n°129-130, 2005. p. 89-121.
- WEIL, Patrick, *Etre français, les quatre piliers de la nationalité*, La Tour d'Aigues, Editions de l'Aube, 2011.







## Conectados e tutelados. Uma revisitação tecnológica da esfera pública.

António Fidalgo

### Introdução

A existência de um espaço público de partilha e de debate de ideias tem como pressupostos fundamentais o exercício autónomo da razão e a liberdade de expressão. No que toca à liberdade de expressão nunca como hoje esse pressuposto do debate público de ideias esteve tão cabalmente realizado. De um ponto de vista formal, encontra-se garantida constitucionalmente pelos poderes públicos na maioria dos países e, quanto à sua materialização, os novos meios de comunicação dão a qualquer indivíduo a possibilidade real de exprimir publicamente a sua opinião. Com efeito, a Internet é hoje um meio decisivo na realização da liberdade expressão. Quanto ao exercício autónomo da razão, porém, o papel dos novos meios é ambivalente; tanto o pode promover como o atrofiar. Propositadamente, deixarei de lado os contributos, que existem, dos meios para uma maior autonomia do pensamento, para me centrar nos aspectos em que os novos meios, em particular os telemóveis, induzem a uma menor autonomia no exercício da razão. A conexão permanente e ubíqua que os telemóveis estabelecem entre os indivíduos torna-os mais dependentes das ideias feitas e dominantes da comunidades em que se inserem. Quanto mais conectados, mais tutelados. É isso que tentarei mostrar nesta comunicação. Para o fazer farei uma releitura do opúsculo de Kant “O que é o iluminismo?”, servir-me-ei da distinção entre “sociedade” e “comunidade” de Tönnies e, sobretudo, socorrer-me-ei do excelente trabalho de Hans Geser “Towards a Sociological Theory of the Mobile Phone” de 2004.

### Causas subjectivas da menoridade de pensamento

Ao definir Iluminismo como a saída do homem da menoridade de que ele próprio é culpado, Kant considera que essa culpa reside em factores individuais: a preguiça e a cobardia<sup>1</sup>. O facto de o homem não pensar por si próprio é devido a ser muito mais cómodo seguir o pensamento alheio do que ter de desenvolver um pensamento seu. A autonomia da razão exige esforço e trabalho, pelo que o homem prefere a facilidade de quem deixa os outros pensar por si. Mas além de preguiça, há também a cobardia. É preciso coragem para pensar por si, para sustentar um pensamento próprio. É

---

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Resposta à pergunta: O que é o iluminismo?”, 1784.



que pensar por si é assumir também os riscos e as responsabilidades inerentes a um pensamento próprio. Ao contrário, quem perfilha as ideias dos outros, não só tem a vida mais facilitada, mas pode também alijar as responsabilidades para cima desses outros e de todos os demais que consigo partilham as mesmas ideias. A menoridade intelectual e moral do homem é quase uma segunda natureza. Daí que seja tão difícil o projecto iluminista. Individualmente seria a bem dizer uma tarefa impossível, não obstante os poucos que, ao longo da História se destacaram pela coragem de pensar pela própria cabeça. A solução para sair dessa menoridade é, segundo Kant, de natureza colectiva. Só um público poderá corporizar o desafio de exercer autonomamente a razão, e de fazer desse exercício uma prática sustentada e permanente.

Mas é perfeitamente possível que um público a si mesmo se esclareça. Mais ainda, é quase inevitável, se para tal lhe for concedida a liberdade. Sempre haverá, de facto, alguns que pensam por si, mesmo entre os tutores estabelecidos da grande massa que, após terem arrojado de si o jugo da menoridade, espalharão à sua volta o espírito de uma estimativa racional do próprio valor e da vocação de cada homem para pensar por si mesmo. (Kant, 1784)

Kant considera mesmo que, do ponto de vista público, é mesmo um processo inevitável, bastando para isso a liberdade de pensamento e de expressão. De um ponto de vista individual, a ilustração é assim um processo quase impossível, apenas reservado a uns poucos intrépidos, a excepção que confirmaria a regra. De um ponto de vista social, porém, a ilustração é uma consequência inevitável da liberdade. A inevitabilidade decorre de processos objectivos postos colectivamente em marcha pelo simples uso público da razão, distinto do uso privado da razão. Como uso público da razão entende Kant “aquele que qualquer um, enquanto erudito, dela faz perante o grande público do mundo letrado.” A visão de Kant é que numa sociedade livre cada indivíduo é estimulado a pensar autonomamente. O estímulo social é crucial e mesmo imprescindível. Ou seja, o exercício autónomo do razão desenvolve-se unicamente no seio de uma sociedade livre, em que os parâmetros espirituais, religiosos e culturais, não são determinados pela força censurante do Estado. A própria convivência social desaloja o indivíduo dos preconceitos e das certezas a que preguiçosamente e cobardemente se habituara e acomodara e obriga-o a empreender o difícil processo da ilustração, a pensar por si mesmo. No entanto, a visão da sociedade livre como fomentadora da ilustração funda-se na ideia de um mundo letrado, formado por eruditos. É um mundo plural que se constitui à volta dos livros e das revistas sem censura e de circulação livre. Verdadeiramente o indivíduo só é estimulado à ilustração se fizer parte desse mundo, se souber ler e tiver acesso aos meios de comunicação. A era do iluminismo é afinal a era da imprensa e da liberdade de expressão. Atribuindo a culpa da menoridade da razão a causas subjectivas e a ilustração a causas objectivas, Kant acaba por fazer da autonomia do pensamento uma consequência, um efeito inevitável, da liberdade de expressão. Kant não coloca a hipótese de a menoridade

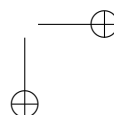
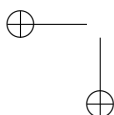


ter causas objectivas, nomeadamente ser causada por factores sociais de convivência humana. A distinção entre comunidade e sociedade mostrará que, muito mais que factores subjectivos, são factores objectivos a condicionarem a tutela de pensamento. A existência de tais factores sociais cria, por sua vez, um hiato e um conflito entre a autonomia do pensamento e a liberdade da expressão. Ou seja, a liberdade de expressão não conduz inevitavelmente a uma maior autonomia de pensamento.

## **Da comunidade à sociedade como processo de emancipação**

A distinção feita por Ferdinand Tönnies entre comunidade e sociedade<sup>2</sup> permite uma explicação mais objectiva e mais cabal das causas pelas quais o homem não ousa fazer um uso autónoma da razão. Não é tanto por preguiça e cobardia que o homem tende à partida a seguir a opinião dos outros, mas pelos vínculos sociais em que nasce, cresce e vive. Ao ser gerado em família, que é o paradigma de qualquer comunidade, o ser humano assume o modo de vida, a língua e os valores vigentes da sua comunidade. O parentesco, a linhagem, a língua, são elementos básicos e estruturantes da identidade de cada indivíduo. A génese e a sobrevivência do indivíduo estão ligados à partilha e à associação com os outros. Assim, as primeiras ideias são as ideias dos outros. É de facto a comunidade que empresta a identidade inicial, social, cultural e religiosa ao indivíduo. A comunidade de sangue, a primeira desemboca numa comunidade de lugar, o lar, que advém, por sua vez, uma comunidade de espírito. Sempre que os homens se associam organicamente, por inclinação ou por comum acordo, a comunidade assume sempre uma destas formas, a de parentesco, a de vizinhança ou a de amizade ou camaradagem. As relações fundamentais do homem são as relações que constituem a comunidade. A comunidade é uma entidade viva e orgânica. Ao invés, a sociedade é uma construção ideal e mecânica. A comunidade é convivência permanente e autêntica, a sociedade é passageira e aparente. Não é possível conceber o ser humano fora da comunidade, nomeadamente fora das relações que estabelece com os pais e demais família, mas é possível concebê-lo fora da sociedade. O homem rural demarca-se do homem urbano justamente pela falta de sociedade. As regras que presidem à sua vida em comunidade são as ditadas pela tradição, pelos usos e costumes, enquanto a vida em sociedade é governada por leis determinadas racionalmente. O que caracteriza antes de mais a sociedade face à comunidade é o distanciamento entre os seus membros. Enquanto na comunidade eles estão unidos apesar do que os separa, na sociedade eles estão separados apesar do que os une. O que se faz na sociedade não provém assim de uma unidade primordial, de um sentimento de pertença a um corpo prévio. Nada na sociedade é mais importante para o grupo do que para

<sup>2</sup>Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, Cambridge University Press, 2001



o indivíduo. Cada um defende os seus interesses individuais em permanente tensão e negociação com os outros. Feita esta distinção crucial, a autonomia de pensamento advogada por Kant significa uma emancipação do indivíduo face à tradição, aos usos e costumes da comunidade original. Essa emancipação é feita a par e passo com a construção da sociedade. O indivíduo torna-se mais independente e autónomo na justa medida em que se liberta dos vínculos comunitários e passa a tomar como referência do pensar e agir a sociedade em que se insere. Descartes escreve que, face à multiplicidade, diversidade e até contradição de usos e costumes que encontrara nas suas viagens pelo mundo fora, não lhe restava alternativa que não fosse procurar em si mesmo os critérios de verdade das normas que se propunha seguir. Ou seja, estabelece o indivíduo, e não a comunidade, como fonte última da verdade e validade de ideias e normas. Kant, por sua vez, defende que tudo deve submeter-se ao tribunal crítico da razão. Só desse modo se alcançará a objectividade e a universalidade dos princípios que hão-de guiar o conhecimento humano, tanto no que se pode saber (razão teórica), como no que se deve fazer e no que se pode esperar (razão prática). Assim, a dúvida metódica e a crítica da razão convertem-se em instrumentos de individualização e de emancipação do homem. Cabe à consciência –e esta é sempre individual!– pronunciar o veredicto sobre a justeza de usos e costumes, ainda que sustentados por uma longa tradição e por uma geral aceitação. O projecto social que anima os finais do século XVIII e todo o século XIX nos países ocidentais e que decorre de profundas transformações, no plano político (as revoluções americana e francesa), no plano económico e social (a revolução industrial e a urbanização) e no plano cultural (a alfabetização da população), é simultaneamente um processo de individualização e de desenraizamento. O reconhecimento de direitos individuais inalienáveis entre os quais a vida, a liberdade e a prossecução da felicidade, consagrados na constituição americana e depois copiados nas constituições dos estados modernos abriu o caminho à sociedade liberal que tem como actores os indivíduos enquanto sujeitos autónomos. Isto é, o lugar que o indivíduo ocupa na sociedade depende de si próprio e não da comunidade de onde provém. Por outro lado, porém, a socialização provocou também um desenraizamento de uma parte significativa das populações. A migração massiva dos campos para as cidades, a alteração profunda das formas de vida, a perda das tradicionais referências culturais e sociais, criaram massas de indivíduos desenraizados, sem pontos comuns entre si que não fossem os interesses de momento. A imprensa assume um papel preponderante na formação da sociedade moderna. Desde logo porque é ela que, mediante o relato de outras regiões e dos respectivos povos, que os navegadores peninsulares descobriram, acaba por relativizar as condições reais de vida então assumidas como únicas dentro das respectivas comunidades. Ao trazer notícias das diferenças de usos e costumes em outras regiões do globo, a imprensa põe em comparação, e de algum modo em causa, os próprios usos e costumes. O que dantes era tido como divinamente estabelecido passa a ser visto como uma pos-



sibilidade entre outras possibilidades. Daí nasce a criação de utopias e distopias que desafiam e criticam o presente estado de coisas existente num determinado reino ou país. A industrialização da imprensa e a alfabetização universal são dois fenómenos essenciais da sociedade do século XIX. A leitura é um acto individual que de algum modo transporta o indivíduo para fora do seu círculo habitual de vida e, ao mesmo tempo, lhe dá um habitat muito mais vasto, isto é, um mundo em que entram regiões distantes e actores desconhecidos. A leitura de jornais, que cobrem uma realidade mais vasta, enfraquece os vínculos que ligam o indivíduo à sua comunidade e situam-no num contexto social mais vasto. A autonomia de pensamento é assim fortemente promovida pela imprensa. O leitor do jornal é sobretudo um cidadão, um membro da sociedade, que ascende a um patamar mais geral, acima das condições particulares da respectiva comunidade.

## A regressão social induzida pelos novos meios

Marshall McLuhan foi o primeiro a dar-se conta de que os meios electrónicos de comunicação, dando ênfase à audição e à recepção colectiva, contribuíam para a formação de novas tribos. Tal verificação vem aliás na sequência da tese mcluhaniana de que foi a literacia a destribalizar o homem. Enquanto o homem dependeu da linguagem oral para comunicar, ele manteve-se integrado num mundo circunscrito pela tribo:

The primary medium of communication was speech, and thus no man knew appreciably more or less than any other – which meant that there was little individualism and specialization, the hallmarks of “civilized” Western man. Tribal cultures even today simply cannot comprehend the concept of the individual or of the separate and independent citizen<sup>3</sup>.

A retribalização do homem através dos meios de comunicação eléctricos ocorre devido à torrente de informação em que o homem é submergido, fazendo com que tudo o que se passa no mundo não só também lhe diga respeito, mas o envolva de um modo completo. A instantaneidade da comunicação eléctrica aproxima radicalmente todos os acontecimentos passados em qualquer parte do mundo. A notícia de um acidente na China pode, graças à sua telegenia, ser levado ao interior da sala de estar pelo televisor, ao passo que um acidente numa cidade geograficamente próxima pode ser ignorado devido ao simples facto de não terem sido captadas imagens. O mundo transforma-se então numa aldeia global. A Internet veio potenciar ao extremo as forças tribelistas dos meios electrónicos. Com efeito, enquanto os meios electrónicos tradicionais, rádio e televisão, ainda fornecem uma informação generalista que,

<sup>3</sup>Marshall McLuhan, “The playboy interview: Marshall mcluhan”, Playboy Magazine, (March), 1969.



numa lógica linear de um para muitos, serve públicos diferenciados, a Internet permite uma personalização radical dos conteúdos recebidos; só se recebe aquilo que se quer receber. É verdade que a Internet oferece como nenhum outro meio acesso à maior variedade de conteúdos, contudo a experiência mostra que o uso efectivamente feito da Internet se concentra num reduzido número de rotinas, de páginas visitadas e de pessoas contactadas. Quem hoje viaja pelo mundo fora munido de um computador portátil e tenha fácil acesso à Internet é como se viajasse envolto no seu mundo privado, qual caracol que leva sempre consigo a sua concha. Num país distante, consultará os mesmos sítios de informação online que costuma consultar em casa, e manter-se-á em contacto, por email, por skype ou qualquer outro serviço de mensagens, com as mesmas pessoas com que habitualmente comunica online. Mas mais do que qualquer outro meio, é o telemóvel que restaura as relações sociais típicas das pequenas comunidades, num “retrocesso aos modelos pré-modernos da vida social.”<sup>4</sup> Num ensaio notabilíssimo de 2004, intitulado “Towards a Sociological Theory of the Mobile Phone”, Hans Geser aponta a regressão social em curso devido à comunicação permanente e ubíqua dos telemóveis:

the cell phone can function as a powerful tool for re-establishing the fluid, casual modes of informal communication typical for traditional communal life – thus counteracting the losses of communalistic social integration caused by traditional media as well as the depersonalizations of modern urban life<sup>5</sup>.

De facto, a verificação quotidiana que fazemos sobre o uso dos telemóveis é que servem muito mais para comunicar com as pessoas mais próximas, como familiares e amigos, do que para comunicar com pessoas mais afastadas ou para iniciar contactos com estranhos. A comunicação móvel reforça os círculos mais restritos em que os indivíduos se inserem, nomeadamente a família e o grupo de amigos íntimos. Geser nota mesmo que o telemóvel dá origem a um novo tipo de comunalismo muito particular, o de um comunalismo trans-espacial, em que a mobilidade requerida pela vida urbana é tornada compatível com a manutenção dos modos primordiais de integração social<sup>6</sup>.

O telemóvel tornou-se o cordão umbilical que mantém os indivíduos ligados à comunidade original apesar de fisicamente se encontrarem longe. O caso mais elucidativo é o das crianças e dos adolescentes que recebem dos pais um telemóvel de forma a ficarem sempre em contacto, o que aumenta em muito o sentimento de segurança dos pais em relação aos filhos. Só que os filhos, apesar de obterem dos pais uma maior liberdade de movimentos, se tornam mais dependentes ao ficarem sempre

<sup>4</sup>Hans Geser, Is the cell phone undermining the social order?, in: Thumb Culture, pp. 1–13. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2005, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>Hans Geser, “Towards a sociological theory of the mobile phone”, 2004, 11.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., 12.



contactáveis. Dantes o afastamento da casa, a ida para a escola, depois para a universidade, significava uma progressiva autonomização do jovem. Longe dos pais, o jovem ficava entregue a si, obrigado a enfrentar o desconhecido, a reagir a imprevistos, a estabelecer contactos com estranhos, a formar o seu próprio juízo e a decidir-se por si, e, claro, a responsabilizar-se pelos actos. Enfim, era obrigado a autonomizar-se. Hoje, permanentemente conectado aos pais, o jovem terá a tendência de, perante uma dificuldade, ligar aos pais para pedir apoio, conselho, ou mesmo para perguntar o que deve fazer. Conectados a toda a hora e em toda a parte com os familiares e amigos, os indivíduos vão perdendo o hábito e a confiança de pensarem e decidirem por si. Tornam-se como crianças, esperando que outros lhes digam o que pensar e, sobretudo, o que fazer. A consequência desta infantilização é a regressão social, a perda de autonomia individual sobre a qual assenta a sociedade. A ordem social, tal como a conhecemos, é assim posta em causa pela comunicação permanente, nomeadamente:

- ao aumentar a influência dos laços primários e particulares em toda a esfera da acção humana,
- ao reduzir a necessidade de organização e de coordenação temporais,
- ao minar as instâncias institucionais de controlo e ao substituir
- os sistemas comunicativos assentes na localização por sistemas baseados na comunicação pessoal,
- ao dar suporte a papéis anacronicamente intrusivos<sup>7</sup>.

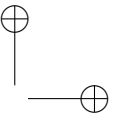
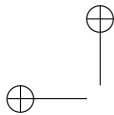
O exercício autónomo da razão esvai-se numa sociedade plenamente conectada. Em vez de tomar posição, o indivíduo tende a agir e a reagir em qualquer circunstância de acordo com o que dele é esperado por aqueles que lhe são próximos. Os telemóveis induzem, de certo modo, a um tipo de relação social semelhante ao das multidões, na acepção de Gabriel Tarde<sup>8</sup>.

As multidões são um agregado de tipo animal, onde a proximidade física dá origem a uma disposição psíquica única. É o todo que age e reage, sem qualquer margem para a reflexão, a dúvida e a crítica. A força da massa impõe-se à vontade individual. Hoje, ao encontrarem-se permanentemente conectados uns aos outros, os indivíduos constituem também como que uma multidão virtual, a reagir instintivamente em uníssono a uma informação, seja notícia ou boato. Concluo. A esfera pública tem como pressupostos a liberdade de expressão e o exercício autónomo da razão. Contrariamente ao que Kant julgou, os dois não se implicam necessariamente. A tecnologia

<sup>7</sup>Geser, Is the cell phone undermining the social order? cit., p. 25.

<sup>8</sup>Gabriel Tarde, A Opinião e as Massas, Martins Fontes, São Paulo, 1992.





pode favorecer imenso a liberdade de expressão e o uso autónomo da razão, mas também os pode estiolar. A conexão permanente e ubíqua realizada pelos telemóveis é hoje causa objectiva de muito pensamento tutelado.

## **Bibliografia**

GESER, Hans, “Towards a sociological theory of the mobile phone”, 2004.

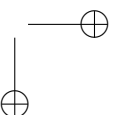
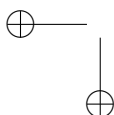
GESER, Hans, Is the cell phone undermining the social order?, in: Thumb Culture, pp. 1–13. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2005.

KANT, Immanuel, “Resposta à pergunta: O que é o iluminismo?”, 1784.

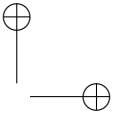
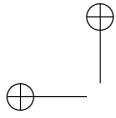
MCLUHAN, Marshall, “The playboy interview: Marshall mcluhan”, Playboy Magazine, (March), 1969.

TARDE, Gabriel, A Opinião e as Massas, Martins Fontes, São Paulo, 1992.

TÖNNIES, Ferdinand, Community and Civil Society, Cambridge University Press, 2001.







## Young adults' involvement in the public sphere: A comparative international study.

Micheline Frenette  
Marie-France Vermette

### Abstract

Communication technologies now permeate every aspect of our lives. For instance, individuals use the Internet more and more (exclusively or with other media) to obtain information on any given topic, read newspapers, take part in academic and professional activities and to communicate with friends or strangers. Such practices are testimony to the transformations in the ways people learn, conduct their affairs, interact with each other and participate in collective endeavours. To study these mutations, we conducted a comparative international study with a few thousand college students in four countries: Canada (Quebec), France (Brittany), Mexico and Sweden<sup>1</sup>.

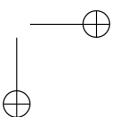
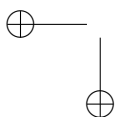
Based on the premise that the appropriation of Internet is anchored in the cultural context which characterizes people's daily lives, the main goal of this study is to better understand the similarities and variations between Internet practices of young adults in different societies.

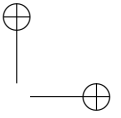
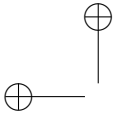
The study draws a portrait of the complex media / Internet practices of young adults in the personal, professional and public spheres of life. The personal sphere refers to the private domain including health matters and affective needs, as well as relationships with loved ones. The professional sphere refers to academic training and how we earn a living. The public sphere refers to the individual's participation in cultural and political life, on the local, national and international levels. The focus of the present paper will be on the latter of the three spheres.

Indeed, Internet practices within the public sphere offer new possibilities for people to become actively involved with cultural and political issues and events. The continuing development of media platforms and social software is believed to be especially appealing to young adults. Indeed, it is often stressed that, compared to their predecessors who generally adhered to traditional party politics and limited themselves to widely shared cultural forms, they are more responsible for the formation of

---

<sup>1</sup>Researchers on the INTER project are: Pascal Plantard, *Université de Rennes 2, France*; Julieta Espinosa, Cony Saenger y Pedrero, Elisa Lugo Villaseñor and Maria Teresa Yurén, *Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Morelos, Mexico*; Ulrika Sjöberg, *Halmstad Universitet* and Ebba Helena Sundin, *Jönköping Universitet, Sweden*; Micheline Frenette and Marie-France Vermette, *Université de Montréal, Quebec*.





their own cultural repertoire and political identities. However, can we hold this to be true for all or most young adults? Our study attempts to shed some light on this question. We will first review some of the literature on the public sphere before presenting the methods and some results drawn from the international comparative survey.

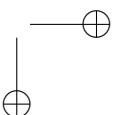
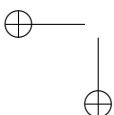
## **Review of the literature.**

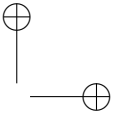
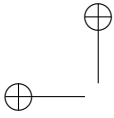
As an introduction to our analytical framework, we will discuss three aspects of the public sphere that have been the object of numerous studies. We will first consider what is meant by the public sphere in general and underline what we consider to be important dimensions. We will then review some studies about the functions that the Internet plays in the public sphere and the involvement of youth in particular, especially with regard to their use of communication technologies such as the Internet.

### **Not a single public sphere but several.**

The notion of public sphere is complex, and consequently, has been the object of multiple definitions, among which the most well known is undoubtedly that of the German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas. Habermas (1989) defines the public sphere as the place in society where political debates take place in order to arrive at a consensus through rational-critical debate and discussion, guided by the idea of the common good. However, several authors have questioned this definition, arguing that there cannot be a single public sphere. For instance, Fraser (1992) in *Rethinking the Public Sphere* believes that marginalized groups are excluded from the universal public sphere as defined by Habermas and thus form their own public spheres: “subaltern counterpublics in parallel discursive arenas that fight against the dominant or hegemonic discourses in the political realm”. We agree with the author about the necessity of seeing the public sphere as a space for multiple discourses that express interests, identities and needs other than the dominant positions.

In addition, Mouffe (2006, in Fenton, 2010: 31) argues against the illusory goal of achieving consensus, given that politics is complex and necessarily interlinked with power relations, but thinks instead that a plural public sphere is more realistic as the end goal. This is reminiscent of Hauser’s (1998) view of the public sphere within which publics are mostly formed by members of society acting around specific issues that are of interest or have perceived consequences for them. Finally, Fenton (2010) extends Fraser’s (1992) idea by stressing the competitive relationship between the dominant or common public sphere (i.e. mass media, traditional politics) and the counter public spheres (i.e. alternative media, social movements, etc.) in order to better understand the nature of these new types of oppositional spaces, such as the





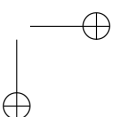
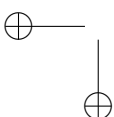
Internet. In other words, there are multiple public spheres catering to different interest groups but these co-exist with the dominant public sphere; indeed, they interact with each other.

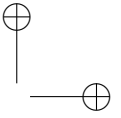
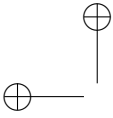
### **Counter public spheres are especially appealing to youth.**

As Bennett (2008) states, it is primordial to have a broad vision of the public sphere following the recent generational shift in the postindustrial democracies from self identity related to traditional politics and culture (strong groups such as labour, class, party) to the network society where individuals participate in loosely tied associational chains and are more responsible for the «production and management of their own social and political identities» (Bennett, 2008: 13). In other words, young adults are now more likely to engage beyond authority margins and define their own identities instead of having it dictated by society. They are likely to defend causes that correspond to their personal values such as the environment, peace and human rights. Theocharis' (2011) argumentation follows the same line of thought because he argues that individuals are now more and more taking part in collective action and extra-institutional activity in order to engage politically within the public sphere rather than traditional forms of political participation. In other words, youth have their own personalized ways to engage in the public sphere as a result of disinterest and disillusion with major institutions of representative democracy.

### **These multiple public spheres are facilitated by ICTs.**

Young adults apparently gravitate towards alternative public spheres not only because of their lack of interest for the dominant political sphere but also because they are immersed in Internet culture. Indeed, although people engaged in counter public spheres long before the Internet existed, a widely held view in the scientific field is that such communication technologies facilitate them. As Bennett (2008) argues (as do others), ICTs play a significant role in defining today's public sphere or what Slevin (2000) calls *public sphere 2.0*. Indeed, Internet allows for collective actions and sharing personal interests with a global group, while seated in front of one's computer. Theocharis (2011), along with Ward (2010), also see the Internet as a key factor of mobilization and as facilitating protest and the consolidation of solidarities because of the ease with which issue oriented political information may be shared, through social networking for example. Jouët (1989) also defends the idea that Internet techniques of self-publication and social modes of interaction on the web allow for the extension of the public sphere. This is done mostly through three sets of digital public spheres: 1) the free speech of professional journalistic practices on media websites, 2) the political blogosphere and 3) the social and leisurely Internet usage of ordinary citizens that leads them to talk about political and public issues casually and





randomly. Rasmussen (2009), for his part, declares that new media, as platforms for debate and deliberation, accelerate internal differentiation within the public sphere, leading to a new complexity of public discourse.

### **But there is no guarantee of citizen involvement.**

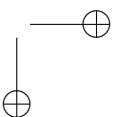
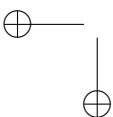
However, some doubts about the real contribution of ICT's to democratic life have also been expressed. For instance, Trenz (2009) shows that the performance of Internet in promoting political communication is still limited and continues, most of the time, to reproduce the national public sphere although multiplying the symbolism of representation by «providing new offers for the identification of publicness through shared problems and solutions». Marden (2011) also asks himself to what end an increasingly interconnected world «provides new opportunities for civil society to enhance democratic practice»? What is the «efficacy of digital democracy and its ramifications for public politics»? Gripsrud (2009) has similar questions about the impact of online democracy. He states that «while there is no doubt digitisation of the public sphere adds new dimensions and new forms of discourse, the implications of these for the overall quality or health of democracy are still quite differently understood by scholars working on these issues».

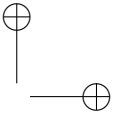
Finally, Theocharis (2011) also underlines the weak effects of Internet on civic engagement, implicitly showing that the potential of Internet is not fully seized by individuals. This idea is related to Bennett's (2008) study on youth that shows their growing interests for entertainment and social networking online rather than engaging in the public sphere. For example, the motivation of young adults to participate in traditional politics has diminished to leave more time for entertainment and interpersonal relations: «A quick visit to any of the social sites suggests that what happens there mainly revolves around the formation of loosely connected networks dedicated to sharing music, movies, photos, and above all, current and prospective friends» (Bennett, 2008: 11).

### **What can we learn from our study.**

Our international comparative survey has been inspired by such reflexions and addresses the following general question. To what extent do college students in general value the media and the Internet as a means to keep abreast of current events, to get involved in public life and to communicate with others about cultural/political issues? In doing so, we have taken into account two considerations that are less often addressed, the cultural dimension of the public sphere(s) and young people's opinion on the role of ICTs in society.

As Gripsrud (2009) point out, the Internet provides access to incomparable cultural resources such as archives, museums and international publications and producti-





ons. We agree with Fenton (2010) that it is imperative to include cultural interests and activities such as the uses of media while exploring Internet practices in the public sphere; indeed, we think that one's cultural profile (i.e. language and country of origin of the newspaper you read, the music you listen to, the television programs you watch, etc.) is necessarily in interrelation with one's everyday participation within society. In other words, one's cultural profile situates him/her as a member of a community, with varying degrees of awareness of the issues and controversies traversing that society and consequently, a particular vision of that society and of his/her place within it. Thus, it is interesting to consider to what extent the Internet practices of college students in the public sphere will be alike or different from one society to the next.

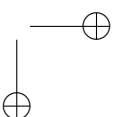
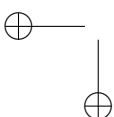
Finally, one rarely comes across studies that give a voice to youth themselves. Practices are extensively documented but how do these young adults view the consequences of Internet for society in general? Part of the survey addresses this issue.

## Methodology.

### The population.

The choice of college students as our core sample is based on theoretical and empirical considerations. College students represent a segment of the population in which Internet usage is both more intense and versatile, and in which new communication practices are more likely to emerge (Bennett, 2008). College students also form a diversified group in which we can observe an array of modes of Internet appropriation based on different contextual variables (sex, field of study, etc.). Another reason to target that specific group is the fact that college students from different countries have in common a contemporary culture and life habits that transcend national borders, thus offering a unique opportunity to observe the direct repercussions of globalization on individuals' daily lives. Finally a certain number of studies show that young adults with better opportunities for education are more prone to engage in the public sphere and their practices are usually more diverse (Theocharis, 2011; Farthing, 2010)

The four societies (France, Quebec, Sweden, Mexico) participating in the study are quite different and allow for interesting comparisons. Although two of them, France and Sweden, are part of the European Union, they are historically and culturally quite distinct as are Quebec and Mexico, even though they are technically on the same continent. With France and Quebec, we have two societies that are respectively European and North American yet share a common language and historical roots. In other words, we have an interesting combination of participants that allows us to observe whether and how young adults from these countries are immersed in their



respective cultures in similar fashion and to what extent they purport to be (and act as) citizens of the world, as many authors would lead us to believe.

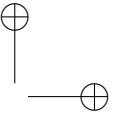
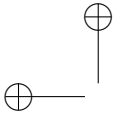
### Data collection.

In total, 4637 questionnaires were distributed in the four countries: 957 questionnaires were handed out in Quebec (Canada); 1350 questionnaires were handed out or filled online in France; 1451 questionnaires were handed out in Mexico and 879 questionnaires were filled out online in Sweden. As may be seen in Table 1, more questionnaires were filled out by women than men except in Mexico where the proportions are similar. A vast majority of students in each country were between the ages of 18 and 24 except in Sweden where more students over 24 years old completed the questionnaire. Somewhat more students in social sciences answered the questionnaire in Quebec and in France compared to Mexico where the number of respondents in each field of study (Arts and letters, Social sciences, Sciences and math and Professional studies) is comparable. Compared to the other three partners, Sweden<sup>2</sup> has more students from the professional programs and fewer from Arts & letters.

	Quebec	France	México	Sweden
<b>Sex</b>				
Women	66	68	53	68
Men	34	32	47	32
<b>Age</b>				
18-24 years old	80	96	89	65
25-30 years old	13	4	5	23
Over 30 years old	7	-	6	12
<b>Field of Study</b>				
Arts and Letters	66	68	53	68
Social Sciences	42	33	26	24
Sciences and Math	19	21	24	25

**Tabela 1:** Sample characteristics by sex, age and field of study in the four countries (in percentages).

<sup>2</sup>Unfortunately, additional data from Sweden were not available in time for this conference.



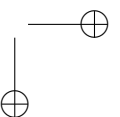
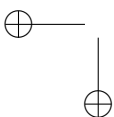
## Results.

The survey questions related to the public sphere in particular explore how young adults use media and the Internet to inform themselves, to get involved in political issues, to partake of society's cultural dimension and to communicate with others about cultural and political issues. Students were asked how they use newspapers, magazines, radio and television in their traditional and Web platforms, as well as venues specific to the Internet, in which language they use these media, and whether they venture out of their geographical frontiers as the Internet allows them to do. We also looked closely at the contents that they favour within these media in an attempt to gauge the place that cultural and political issues hold for them. On the evaluative front, we asked them to what extent they value the Internet as a means for them to be better informed and more easily involved in public affairs. We were also interested in their broader vision of how they conceive of the consequences of Internet for society, for instance whether it contributes to cultural diversity, allows for the construction of collective knowledge, empowers ordinary citizens and holds political and financial institutions more accountable. We will first consider students' sources of information on the public sphere before considering the cultural and political dimensions while comparing the three countries.

### From which sources do students construct their vision of the public sphere?

**Newspapers.** First, to what extent do students use the *print* media? National newspapers provide extensive coverage of all topics from a specific cultural and/or political perspective and share a wide readership. We found that the readership of national newspapers<sup>3</sup> in our sample varies greatly from one country to the next: two thirds in Quebec (66%), less than half in Mexico (48%) and a third in France (35%). In each case they are surpassed by a different publication: the free press in Qc (70%), the regional press (81%) as well as the free press (60%) in France and cultural weeklies in Mexico (55%) where the free press comes in last (32%). The free press provides a convenient bite-size overview of current events. In Quebec, the students we interviewed live in Montreal, a fairly large city with a subway system where two free newspapers are distributed. It is easy to see how they fit in conveniently with students' life-style. In France, we may suppose that there is a strong identification with Brittany where the survey was conducted and that it becomes the main prism of what is going on in the country and in the world. From that angle, they are quite

<sup>3</sup>In Quebec, a national newspaper refers to a French-language publication that is distributed in the whole province and in other parts of Canada where there are French-speaking minorities, as opposed to regional newspapers.



similar to their peers in Quebec. As for Mexico, we take notice of a strong attraction to cultural topics since a specialized publication surpasses all the others. We would need to take a closer look at the contents of these publications as well as their mode of distribution to truly understand their respective popularity but our immediate goal is to observe how students use the print media very differently to construct their worldview, depending on the particular cultural context in which they live.

Could it be that students prefer the *on-line* version of newspapers? Mexican students appear to take advantage of them to a greater extent than their peers in Quebec and France. Indeed, one third of Mexican students read the online version of the national dailies and one in five reads the online version of international newspapers; in addition, they also use the Internet to consult the free press (31%), cultural weeklies (39%), political journals (22%) and newspapers from elsewhere in the country (26%). In Quebec, 35% consult the national dailies on line and a small number of students (23%) also take advantage of the Internet to read international newspapers. Although a quarter of the French students read the on-line version of national newspapers, it is still somewhat less than their fellow students in Quebec and Mexico. In addition, none of the other publications in their on-line version interests them.

We may observe some similarities with respect to on-line newspapers between the three countries. What first stands out is that the on-line version of any type of newspaper is read by only a minority of students. We also notice that the on-line version of national newspapers is read in a complementary fashion to its print version; it may be that students glean the headlines from the on-line version and read the print version more extensively. Surprisingly, very few students anywhere take advantage of the Internet to read the international press. One difference that may be observed is that Mexican students consult the online version of different newspapers to a greater extent than all the others.

**Radio.** Without making any judgments on the quality of programming as such, it is safe to say that public radio and television stations have a mandate to present a balanced view of trends and opinions found in society and to support the expression of different cultural forms. Private stations on the other hand can choose to focus on a specific content and in some cases, favour one political perspective over all others. Therefore it is interesting to see to what kinds of stations students listen to and whether they take advantage of the Internet to extend their range of radio programming.

There is a small tendency for private stations to surpass public and classical stations in popularity in Quebec where students share their listening time between private radio stations both in French (67%) and in English (58%)<sup>4</sup>. Private radio stations are also the most popular among the Mexican students (57%). However, public and

<sup>4</sup>In Canada, there is a dual broadcasting system : we find private and public stations both in French and in English.



classical stations attract as many Mexican students, but somewhat less so in Quebec (45%). In France, most students (80%) listen to national radio stations, whether public or private<sup>5</sup>. In all three countries, students tend not to visit radio stations' websites nor listen to international stations via the Internet.

**Television.** Not surprisingly, television is quite popular among all respondents. In Quebec, a strong majority of 83% listens to private French-language stations and an equal proportion to the public stations. Half of the respondents in Quebec also listen to English-language television, both Canadian and American. In Mexico, 86% of students listen to private stations but fewer (68%) listen to public stations. When it comes to *information channels*, Quebec respondents clearly prefer French language stations (59%) followed by American stations (25%) and English language stations from Canada (12%). In Mexico, somewhat surprisingly for outside observers, the popularity of national and American information stations is comparable (41% and 44%). Finally, a fair number of Quebec students (38%) listen to *international television stations* in comparison with 18% of their Mexican peers and 14% of their French peers. In short, students in Quebec experience a broader range of television sources than their peers in France and Mexico. Although they favour culturally specific programming over others both for general purposes and for information, they also watch television programs in English from Canada and the USA.

At the time of the survey in 2007-08, visiting the Web sites of television stations was not a well established practice in general although we may observe that 44% of the Mexican respondents did visit the Web sites of the stations they most listen to daily; in so doing, they outnumbered their Quebec counterparts since only 29% of them occasionally visited some television sites. Nowadays, more and more television stations operate web platforms where their shows are accessible at all times. Hence, the results would likely be very different today albeit it remains to be seen if these new venues serve mainly to view programs in a more convenient fashion or are taken advantage of for more interactive purposes.

**Internet.** In trying to gauge the role of the Internet in the public sphere, a first consideration is how much time students devote to the media overall. The interest here is not so much the specific number of hours since this kind of statistics is very volatile but rather the similarities or differences between the three countries at the time of the survey. We may observe in Table 2 that the most frequent time range in all three countries during the school year is from one to three hours daily (61% in Quebec, 53% in Mexico and 43% in France). However, there are more intensive users in Mexico and more light users in France. During summer vacation, Quebec students clearly reduce the time they spend on the Internet and have the highest proportion of light users of the three; their Mexican peers also spend less time on the Internet

<sup>5</sup>Unfortunately, data on the distinct popularity of private and public radio and television stations is not available for France.

during the summer, but French students, on the contrary, increase it. Is it possible that they have less of an opportunity to use the Internet when they are on campus and catch up, so to speak, when school lets out? It may also be that Quebec and Mexican students are busier than their French peers during the summer months with jobs, travel or outdoor activities?

	Quebec	France	México
<b>During school year</b>			
Less than an hour	15	34	15
From 1 to 3 hours	61	43	53
From 4 to 6 hours	7	13	12
More than 6 hours	7	9	17
<b>During vacation</b>			
Less than an hour	42	24	25
From 1 to 3 hours	37	52	36
From 4 to 6 hours	2	7	15
More than 6 hours	6	14	12

**Tabela 2:** Time spent daily on the Internet by students in the three countries (in percentages).

## What are the cultural and political components of their public sphere?

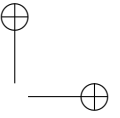
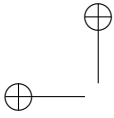
For both the cultural and political dimensions of the public sphere, we consider to what extent students engage in activities related to these two dimensions with the media and the Internet, how satisfied they are with their practices and how they view the consequences of Internet for society in general.

### Cultural dimension.

With regard to **newspapers**, the interest of Quebec and Mexican students is greater for society issues and cultural topics than for politics whereas these two themes are on a par with politics among French students. A larger number of students in Quebec read about society (90%) and culture (88%) in newspapers than in both France (71% and 74%) and Mexico (69% and 73%).

Mexican students are more frequent listeners of cultural programs on the **radio** (58%) as compared to their peers in France and Quebec (25% and 27%).

The majority of students take advantage of the **Internet** to search for information about cultural events but the percentage varies from one society to the next. The



habit is especially well established in Quebec since 86% of the respondents do so in comparison with their peers in France (63%) and in Mexico (58%).

When we consider **cultural activities** on the Internet, listening to music is definitely the most popular among all the students: around three quarters of Quebec, French and Mexican students report enjoying this activity on a regular basis. In comparison, a minority of students are interested in visiting art exhibits on the Internet, although the Mexican students do so somewhat more than their Quebec and French counterparts (39%, 22% and 14% respectively).

Quebec students report an extremely high level of personal satisfaction with their Internet search on cultural topics (96%), to find new musical trends (93%) and to learn about other cultures (87%). However, their peers are somewhat less enthusiastic in France (72%, 60% and 49% respectively) as well as in Mexico (57%, 61% and 62% respectively).

In short, Quebec students make a greater use of the Internet to partake of the cultural dimension of the public sphere and seem more satisfied with this practice. Mexican students engage in specific cultural practices both with traditional media and the Internet that are quite marginal in the two other societies.

As to their global **perception of Internet in society** from a cultural perspective, the majority of students in Quebec (79%) and in Mexico (69%) are confident that it encourages cultural diversity while their French peers are less certain; only half of them believe so and a third do not have a clear opinion on the matter. However, half of the respondents from the three countries believe that the Internet also favors the cultural dominance of some countries over others. It is plausible that opposing forces are pulling simultaneously in both directions.

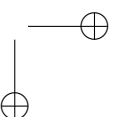
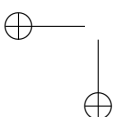
### Political dimension.

A comfortable majority of students in Quebec and France read about national politics (80% and 74%) and international politics (80% and 77%) in **newspapers**. However, their Mexican peers appear less interested since 58% read about national politics and 46% about international politics.

A similar number of students from Quebec (40%) and Mexico (43%) read **magazines** devoted to current affairs and politics whereas this kind of publication is not popular among French students. A third of the Mexican students also consult the on-line version of these magazines compared to 18% of their Quebec peers (the question was not asked in France).

More Mexican students (67%) turn to **radio** for news and public affairs as compared to students in Quebec (34%) and in France (40%).

Students from the three countries are quite similar in the fact that an overwhelming majority of 90% listen to **television** news. Public affairs programming also



attracts two thirds of Quebec and Mexican students but only a quarter of their French peers. They also watch information channels as discussed earlier.

A strong majority of Quebec students (82%) take advantage of the **Internet** to search for information about political issues but less than half of their counterparts in France (46%) and in Mexico (39%) do likewise.

A similar proportion of students in Mexico (31%) and in Quebec (27%) view **videos** on news and public affairs on You Tube or other video sharing web sites while fewer French students (21%) do so. However, practically none of the respondents in the three countries actually post such contents. Neither are their personal spaces on the Internet used for political motives.

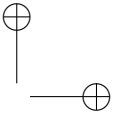
Very few students in either of the three countries visit media Web sites in order to **communicate** with other members of the public or with media professionals. Close to half the students in Quebec and Mexico communicate with people in their own country about political issues (and cultural events as well) and only a handful take advantage of the Internet to venture out of their geographical frontiers with regard to these issues.

Quebec students report an extremely high **level of satisfaction** with their Internet search about politics (86%) but their peers are clearly less enthusiastic in France (39%) and in Mexico (42%).

In short, to partake of the political dimension of the public sphere, Mexican students favour radio and magazines, French and Quebec students are fond of newspapers and the latter also make a greater use of the Internet while everyone remains faithful to television.

As to their global **perception of Internet in society** from a political perspective, a strong majority of students think that the Internet allows the construction of a collective knowledge base although a larger number of Quebec students think so (90%), followed by the French (83%) and the Mexicans (70%). Students in all three societies are much more dubious about the fact that Internet empowers ordinary citizens or increases solidarity among people since only a third agree, while a third disagree and the last third have no clear opinion on the matter. However as to whether the Internet encourages greater transparency from public and financial organisations, students in France are the most skeptical since only one student out of five thinks so while a third disagree and 40% do not know. Students in Quebec are a little more optimistic since a third of them agree while Mexican students are the most optimistic of the three, given that 43% of them believe so.

In sum, a greater number of students in the three countries navigate the Internet for information on cultural events in comparison with information about political issues and understandably so, since they probably plan their outings in this way. However, a higher proportion of students in Quebec turn to the Internet for searches on both these



topics, followed by the French students and the Mexican students and the disparity is especially noticeable with regard to politics.

## Discussion and conclusion.

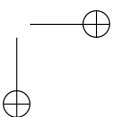
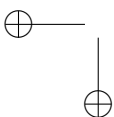
Hopefully, our study may serve to shed some light on the actual Internet practices that are being engaged in by young adults within the public sphere. To that end, we would like to point out six considerations that emerge from our data analysis that can inform our understanding of the phenomenon and serve as springboards for further investigations.

First, the international comparison of our data allows us to observe important variations in the time that the respondents spend on the Internet and how they engage in the public sphere from one country to the next. Therefore, it is misleading to assume that young people are universally immersed in Internet culture as several studies seem to imply. This observation stresses the importance of contextualisation when it comes to talking about the Internet practices of young adults in the public sphere and serves as a reminder not to generalize too quickly about youth's Internet practices in that sphere. Practices vary greatly not only between college students within the same university but also between regions of the world.

Second, our data suggests that the national public sphere predominates in all three countries analyzed. This observation is not meant as a disparaging remark. In fact, it would be worrisome if young adults were not interested in what is happening in their own society. However, it does serve to temper the optimism that is often expressed about the "global or transnational citizen" (i.e., Marden (2011), Trenz (2009)). To put it differently, there does not seem to exist a transnational college student.

Third, when considering the role of Internet in how people construe the public sphere, it is important to keep in mind that the mass media are still part of the picture and not necessarily their on-line platforms; indeed, students in all three countries still read newspapers, listen to the radio and watch television in the traditional fashion. Although there is a constantly evolving synergy between traditional media and ICTs, they do still need to be considered together. For instance, we saw important variations in how students from one country to the next keep abreast of the political scene. Students in Quebec and France read more newspapers on the topic than their Mexican peers while the latter make greater use of radio; students from all three countries watch TV news but those in Quebec and Mexico also favour public affairs programming.

Fourth, culture is a fundamental component of the public sphere and should be considered in tandem with the political arena. The latter is often the sole focus while in fact, culture often takes first place to politics in young adults' concerns and Internet activities. Not surprisingly, the universally popular cultural activity is listening to



music and only a small minority are drawn to the more innovative aspects of the Internet such as visiting art exhibits. However, one could explore whether the Internet has broadened students' musical repertoire.

Fifth, although Internet allows astonishing opportunities for individuals to participate in the public sphere, it does not mean that the potential of this media is constantly and fully exploited by college students. Indeed, we saw that students rarely go online on a day to day basis to collect information, take action or communicate about cultural and political issues. In other words, it is not because the advantages of Internet to engage in the public sphere are significant (i.e. communicate with people around the world, organize protests, obtain political information or learn about cultural events from different points on the globe, etc.), that college students will necessarily see the need to take advantage of them on a permanent basis. As Gripsrud (2009) points out, involvement in the public sphere is always an option that can be actualized when the need is felt. Jouët (2009) remarks that there are varying degrees of public involvement, from permanent activism to fleeting interest. Our data suggest that the first kind remains a minority. Since overall, students in our survey are more often observers of the public sphere than active participants, the important question then becomes why they choose this stance. It may be that they go online to engage in the public sphere during specific periods or for special causes (i.e., elections, summit meetings, unpopular legislation, armed conflicts, etc). But part of the answer may lie in how they view the Internet.

Sixth, when analyzing Internet practices and speculating about the potential of Internet, we think it is important to take into account young adults' viewpoints on the matter. Indeed, our data show that there is significant variation between societies as to how satisfied they are with their own practices and how they view the social role of Internet. Although students in the three countries vary with respect to their level of optimism or skepticism, on the whole, they tend to be optimistic about the role of Internet in the construction of collective knowledge but skeptical with regard to its potential to empower ordinary citizens or to encourage transparency from financial and political organisations. These views are coherent with the fact that they choose to remain in the margins of the public sphere without explaining the source of this discontent.

As a concluding remark, we want to underline the fact that much research remains to be done and that some additional analyses are already under way. To further our understanding of the diversity of practices in the public sphere within and between countries, we are currently examining potential differences with regard to variables such as sex, field of study and age. These supplementary analyses will allow us to trace as complete a portrait as possible of the complexity of Internet practices in the public sphere among college students and to formulate suggestions for further studies. It will be especially interesting to explore how the dynamics of the public

sphere are being once again challenged by the popularity of such communication technologies as Facebook and Twitter. Nonetheless, ICTs such as the Internet, no matter how sophisticated they become, will not in and of themselves transform young adults' involvement in the public sphere unless they feel strongly motivated to do so. However, those hoping for greater involvement could harness their potential and try to reach young adults in ways that speak to their concerns and values.

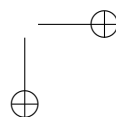
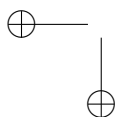
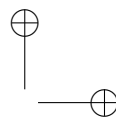
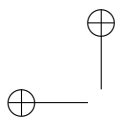
## References

- BANAJI, S. (2008). The trouble with civic: A snapshot of young people's civic and political engagements in twenty-first century democracies, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(5), 543-560.
- BAUMGARTNER, JC. & MORRIS JS. (2010). MyFaceTube Politics Social Networking Web Sites and Political Engagement of Young Adults, *Social Science Computer Review*, 28(1), 24-44.
- BENNETT, W. L. (2008). Changing citizenship in the digital age. In *Civic life online: Learning how digital media can engage youth* (pp. 1-25). Cambridge, MA : MIT Press.
- CALENDA, D. & MEIJER, A. (2009). Young people, the Internet and political participation. Findings of a web survey in Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, *Information, communication & society*, 12(6), 879-898.
- COLLIN, P. (2008). The internet, youth participation policies, and the development of young people's political identities in Australia, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(5), 527-542.
- DE VREESE, CH. (2007). Digital renaissance: Young consumer and citizen? *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science*, 611, 207-216.
- FARTHING, R. (2010). The politics of youthful antipolitics: representing the 'issue' of youth participation in politics, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13 (2), 181-195.
- FENTON, N. (2010). Re-imagining democracy. Mew media, young people, participation and politics. In OLSSON, T. & DAHLGREN, P. (Eds), *Young people, ICTs and democracy. Theories, policies, identities and websites* (pp. 19-34). Göteborg, Sweden : Nordicom.
- FINDAHL, O. (2009). The Internet as a Complement to Traditional Media: A Cross Country Comparison. In CARDOSO, G., CHEONG, A. & COLE, J. (Eds),

- World Wide Internet: Changing Societies, Economies and Cultures* (pp. 51-74). Macao, China: University of Macau.
- FRASER, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In CALHOUN, C. (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 109-142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- FRELON, DG. (2011). Talking among themselves. Online youth civic communication in managed and autonomous environments, *Information, communication & society*, 14(2), 198-218.
- GENIETS, A. (2010). Lost in translation: Why civic online efforts in Britain have failed to engage young women from low socioeconomic backgrounds, *European Journal of Communication*, 25(4), 398-412.
- GRIPSRUD, J. (2009). Digitising the Public Sphere: Two Key Issues, *Javnost - The Public*, 16 (1), 5-16.
- HABERMAS, J. (1989) (German 1962) *The structural transformation of the public sphere : An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press.
- HAUSER, G. (1998). Vernacular dialogue and the rhetoricality of public opinion, *Communication monographs*, 65 (2), 83-107.
- HOOGE, M., VISSERS, S., STOLLE, D. & MAHEO, VA. (2010). The potential of Internet mobilization: An experimental study on the effect of Internet and face-to-face mobilization efforts, *Political communication*, 27 (4), 406-431.
- JOUËT, J. (2009). The Internet as a New Civic Form. The Hybridisation of Popular and Civic Web Uses in France, *Javnost - The Public*, 16 (1), 59-72.
- KUSHIN, MJ. & YAMAMOTO, M. (2010). Did Social Media Really Matter? College Students' Use of Online Media and Political Decision Making in the 2008 Election, *Mass Communication & Society*, 13(5), 608-630.
- MARDEN, P. (2011). The Digitised Public Sphere: Re-defining Democratic Cultures or Phantasmagoria? *Javnost - The Public*, 18 (1), 5-20.
- PARKER, D. & SONG, M. (2009). New ethnicities and the Internet: Belonging and the negotiation of difference in multicultural Britain, *Cultural Studies*, 23 (4), 583-604.
- RASMUSSEN, T. (2009). The significance of Internet communication in public deliberation, *Javnost - The Public*, 16 (1), 17-32.



- SLEVIN, J. (2000). *The Internet and Society*. Malden, MA : Polity Press.
- TEDESCO, JC. (2007) Examining Internet interactivity effects on young adult political information efficacy, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50 (9), 1183-1194.
- THEOCHARIS, Y. (2011). Young People, Political Participation and Online Postmaterialism in Greece, *New Media & Society*, 13 (2), 203-223.
- TRENZ, H.-J. (2009). Digital Media and the Return of the Representative Public Sphere, *Javnost - The Public*, 16 (1), 33-46.
- VITAK J., ZUBE, P., SMOCK, A., CARR, CT., ELLISON, N. & LAMPE, C. (2011). It's Complicated: Facebook User's Political Participation in the 2008 Election, *Cyberpsychology Behavior & Social Networking*, 14 (3), 107-114.
- VROMEN, A. (2008). Building virtual spaces: Young people, participation and the Internet, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 43 (1), 79-97.
- VROMEN, A. (2007). Australian young people's participatory practices and internet use, *Information, Communication & Society*, 10 (1), 48 - 68.
- WARD, J. (2010). Purchasing or protesting? Expanding the notion of the (online) citizen consumer. In OLSSON, T. & DAHLGREN, P. (Eds), *Young people, ICTs and democracy. Theories, policies, identities and websites* (pp. 35-50). Göteborg, Sweden : Nordicom.
- WELLS, C. (2010). Citizenship and communication in online youth civic engagement projects, *Information, communication & society*, 14 (2), 198-218.
- WENDELIN, M. (2009). Habermas vs. Noelle-Neumann: The Impact of Habitus on Theoretical Construction of the Public Sphere, *Javnost-The Public*, 13(3), 419-441.





## Speaking Poetry to Power.

Anthea Garman

### Abstract.

In the post-apartheid South African public sphere, the exclusion and alienation that the colonial and apartheid experiences generated live on in crises of authority, the contestation over sources of legitimation and an ongoing suspicion of Western-informed knowledge practices. Redress and restitution are high on the agenda in South Africa and the mode of rational-critical debate conducted by a ‘free-floating’, independent intellectual with roots in liberal democracy and the Enlightenment is therefore not embraced unequivocally. So while there are classic performances in which ‘public intellectuals’ ‘speak truth to power’ via debate and the generation of persuasive ideas, there is also a proliferation of other types of engagements – notably the aesthetic and affective, which root their authorisation in other modes and traditions.

This article focuses on the white, female, Afrikaans-speaking poet, journalist and author Antjie Krog (*Country of My Skull*, *A Change of Tongue* and *Begging to Be Black*), who, over a period of nearly four decades, has continued to have a public profile and to put powerful ideas into public, despite the political shifts and changing complexity of our public discourse and spaces. My study investigates why Krog’s particular style of public engagement has powerful effects in South Africa and further afield.

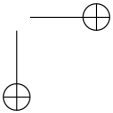
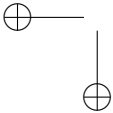
This study does not take at face value that public intellectuals are simply emblematic personae enabling rational-critical debate on matters of general social and political importance, but is based on the theoretical premise that ‘public intellectual’ is a ‘trope’ – an embodied means for societies to grapple with the problems of citizenship, identity and power.

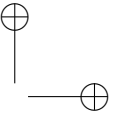
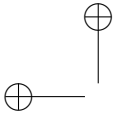
This focus on the figure of the public intellectual seeks to unpack the mechanisms by which a speaking position can be found and used with authority and influence in a complex post-colonial space.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic, affective, Antjie Krog, performance, public intellectuals; public sphere; South Africa.

*The final words of **Country of My Skull***

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 91-105



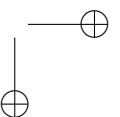
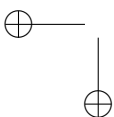


*But I want to put it more simply. I want this hand of mine to write it.  
For us all; all voices, all victims:  
because of you  
this country no longer lies  
between us but within  
it breathes becalmed  
after being wounded  
in its wondrous throat  
in the cradle of my skull  
it sings, it ignites  
my tongue, my inner ear, the cavity of my heart  
shudders towards the outline  
new in soft intimate clicks and gutturals  
of my soul the retina learns to expand  
daily because by a thousand stories  
I was scorched  
a new skin.  
I am changed for ever. I want to say  
forgive me  
forgive me  
forgive me  
You whom I have wronged, please  
take me  
with you*

(Krog, 1998)

## **The post-apartheid public sphere.**

In post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa, in which the majority black population now has access to power, the avowedly Africanist, nationalist government has taken seriously that as part of the functioning of democracy, this new nation needs a vibrant public space for the airing of ideas and the formation of public opinion. The idea of the public sphere, steeped in the Enlightenment and the earliest formations of democracies in western European countries, is harnessed to the ideal of an inclusive democracy which represents the majority, upholds their interests and promotes their activities as vocal citizens participating in the life of the nation. Thus, a crucial dimension of the energy expended on the functioning of the public sphere is on the widening of the public domain, beyond the participation of the bourgeois, to facilitate the inclusion of the voices of the black majority.



In the years of the Thabo Mbeki presidency, in particular, a great many “calls” were put out for various types of intellectuals to take up a public position and contribute to the healthiness of public life. In particular, the educated, the skilled and the thoughtful among black South Africans were urged to emerge from different locations politically and socially, as intellectuals. Calls were made for revolutionary intellectuals, organic intellectuals, black intellectuals, native intellectuals, African intellectuals and the intelligentsia, to come forward, join and direct debate. Often coupled with these calls were statements invoking Edward Said’s concerns and ideas about public intellectual representation, and so the phrase “speaking truth to power” (with multiple interpretations) has become a familiar one in South African public discourse.

But South Africa’s public domain is shot through with anomalies. The exclusion and alienation that the colonial and apartheid experiences generated live on in contestation over authority, sources of legitimation and an ongoing suspicion of Western-informed knowledge practices. This suspicion was sharpened by the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings which opened up the past for scrutiny of the atrocities committed by the apartheid government, and is heightened by global debates about the spread of human rights, the inclusion of the marginalised peoples of the world into proper nationhood and the struggles in many democratic states for full citizenship and recognition. Redress and restitution are high on agenda in South Africa and a constant topic of public debate.

Therefore, the mode of rational-critical debate conducted by a “free-floating”, independent intellectual with roots in liberal democracy and the Enlightenment – both closely historically implicated in the politics of colonialism and apartheid – is therefore not embraced unequivocally as the only useful means for driving a programme of redress and reclamation of dignity and indigenous wisdom. So while there are classic performances in which “public intellectuals” in South Africa “speak truth to power” via debate and the generation of persuasive ideas, there is also a proliferation of other types of engagements which root their authorisation not in the bourgeois public sphere ideal or in western universalism but in other modes and traditions. This results in furious discussions about styles of engagement, suitable subject matter, sources of authority, vested interests and arguments about degrees of independence from government and national and even continental projects (such as the African Renaissance). A notable feature of these debates is that discussions are often couched in the language of “crisis”, which points not to the overt dangers being espoused, but another one entirely – a crisis about what constitutes authority to speak (and especially to speak on behalf of others) in such a post-colonial situation.

In the immediate years of transition from apartheid, Thabo Mbeki, first as deputy president and then as president, initiated a number of activities to rally African intellectuals to the cause of the transformation of both Africa and South Africa. Acting in the capacity of “convening the public sphere” (Hamilton, 2008), Mbeki initiated and

hosted the African Renaissance conference in 1998 and attended the Codesria conference in Dakar, Senegal in December 2003 on “Intellectuals, Nationalism and the Pan-African idea” and the “First Meeting of Intellectuals of Africa and the Diaspora” (hosted by the newly-formed African Union) also in Dakar in October 2004. Mbeki embraced the notion of the value of intellectuals to the political, social and economic transformation of the continent. Mbeki and his presidency staff saw their role as an active intervention in public. Using the weekly email newsletter *ANC Today* and headlined “The Sociology of the Public Discourse in Democratic South Africa” (14-20 January and 21-27 January 2005), they said:

... in South Africa the fight is really about who sets the national agenda. Should it be the African National Congress (ANC) or should it be the white elite?

The following points were made: the intellectual battle going on in public is between the “white elite” and the ANC “black majority government”. The ANC believes it “has a mandate to set the countrys priorities”. By contrast the white elite’s “interest is to protect its wealth and lifestyle”. The “white elite continues to believe that it has a responsibility to provide ‘thought leadership’ to an African population that is ‘intellectually at zero’”. While the newsletter asserts the importance of robust public debate and the value of hearing opinions from all quarters, the “white elite” is characterised as wanting to confine debate in both tone and spaces.

## The poet Antjie Krog.

It is against this complex context, in which debates have often fallen into a racial polarisation or a pro- or anti-ANC government polarisation, that a focus on a person such as poet, journalist and book author Antjie Krog is such an interesting study. That a white, Afrikaner female voice such as Krog’s – with its commitment to the personal, the intimate, the affective and the aesthetic – gets a hearing in this context, and is received favourably, means attention must be paid also to subjectivity and identity, the use of self, body, the experiential and the confessional in this public domain.

Krog, a white, Afrikaans woman born in 1952 into the heart of Afrikaner privilege, burst into the Afrikaans literary world in 1970, with a set of poems in her high school year book. The sexual and political content of the poetry caused a furore in the Afrikaans newspapers. An editor drew two major poets<sup>1</sup> into the fracas who commented approvingly on the standard of the poetry, and this resulted in her first volume of poems<sup>2</sup> being published when she was just 17. At university Krog

<sup>1</sup> Etienne van Heerden and DJ Opperman.

<sup>2</sup> *Dogter van Jefta*.

continued to produce more volumes in quick succession<sup>3</sup> and to win awards for her work. The apartheid-supporting, Afrikaans-language press had her firmly on their radar. Krog continued to write attention-getting poetry which showed a distinctive use of colloquial language with emphasis on experiences of sexuality and the body. Literary academics were also taking note and beginning to study her work. In the 1980s her stature as a poet grew<sup>4</sup> and she started receiving invitations to speak publicly about poetry and literature. But during this time she took a stance of increasing dissidence from the Nationalist Party regime<sup>5</sup> and she began to use these events – and the resulting media attention – to denounce the Afrikaans cultural institutions' imbrication in the apartheid structures. As Krog's dissidence deepened; she became more involved with anti-apartheid township activists and she became ever more outspoken in public about the devastating impact of apartheid on culture and literature<sup>6</sup>. In 1989 she joined a group of Afrikaner intellectuals and authors who crossed the border into Zimbabwe to meet members of the banned and exiled ANC<sup>7</sup>. As soon as the ANC was unbanned in 1990 Krog joined the liberation movement.

In 1995 (the year after the country's first democratic election) Krog joined the SABC's reformed parliamentary journalistic team as its Afrikaans-language reporter. As soon as the new government passed the law for a commission into the atrocities of the past, Krog was given the post of leader of the SABC's reporting team on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). When the TRC undertook its first hearings in April of 1996, Krog was there. By May the horror of the content surfaced by the hearings started to affect the journalists covering them. When Anton Harber, editor of the *Mail & Guardian*, asked various authors to write for a series called "Two years of transition", Krog, blurted out the toll on her personally of covering the TRC. The essay touched a chord with editor and readers and she was invited to write more features about the experience of being an implicated white witness to the hearings:

I can talk about nothing else. But I don't talk about it at all... I wake up in unfamiliar beds with blood on my frayed lips... and the soundbites screaming in my ears... My hair is falling out. My teeth are falling out. I have rashes. After the amnesty deadline I enter my house like a stranger. And barren. I sit around for days. Staring. My youngest walks into a room and flinches: "Sorry, I'm not used to your being home."  
(Krog, 1996)

These newspaper essays won Krog the Foreign Correspondents' Award for

<sup>3</sup> *Januarie Suite* in 1972, and *Mannin* and *Beminde Antartika* in 1974.

<sup>4</sup> In 1985 she produced the prize-winning *Jerusalem-gangers*.

<sup>5</sup> The party which came to power in 1948 and institutionalised formal apartheid in every facet of South African life.

<sup>6</sup> She became a member of the anti-government Congress of South African Writers with members like Miriam Tladi and Nadine Gordimer.

<sup>7</sup> Ironically this same year she won Afrikaans literature's highest award, the Hertzog Prize for her volume *Lady Anne*.

1997<sup>8</sup>. The essays caught the eye of Stephen Johnson, managing director of the South African branch of publisher Random House. He approached Krog to turn the writing and experiences into a book. In 1998 *Country of My Skull* was published. Its blend of journalistic reportage, verbatim testimony, poetry and other literary material made it a work reviewers found difficult to categorise. Literary theorist Mark Sanders called it “a hybrid work, written at the edges of reportage, memoir and metafiction” (Sanders, 2000), and fellow Afrikaans author Rian Malan (who wrote the confessional *My Traitor's Heart*) called it “a great impressionistic splurge of blood and guts and vivid imagery, leavened with swathes of post-modern literary discourse and fragments of brilliant poetry” (Malan, 1998). The book propelled Krog into the international arena as an authority on the South African transition and won her an array of prizes<sup>9</sup>. As a result of this book Krog received offers from governments, universities and international agencies to visit, read and speak as a witness of the South African transition to democracy.

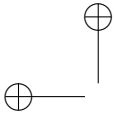
Her literary output since the publication of *Country of My Skull* has not only intensified but has also been singled out for further awards and praise. She followed up in 2003 with a second non-fiction book about the South African transformation called *A Change of Tongue* (2004 Bookseller's Choice Award), in which again, she used a mix of reportage and autobiography to investigate how present-day South Africans are coping with political and social change, and then in 2009 the third book in the trilogy of adapting to upheaval and transition as a white South African, *Begging to be Black*, was published. While Krog's literary output has always been the topic of attention for literary study and theses, since the publication of *Country of My Skull* the academy has begun to treat her differently, as not just the author of a literary corpus but as a producer of knowledge in her own right. This has taken the form of acknowledgement via the conferring of honorary doctorate status, her inclusion as a keynote speaker among academics at major conferences, and more importantly in a post created especially for her as an Extraordinary Professor at the University of the Western Cape. Her status as a “mediator of South African culture”, as a translator, journalist, poet and as a person “on the world stage” has also been studied in a special edition of the journal *Current Writing* (Volume 19 Issue 2 of 2007).

Other indications that Krog has attained a position of great public renown are the features of celebrity and popularity attached to her public persona – particularly th-

<sup>8</sup> Shared with Justice Malala, a senior writer on the *Financial Mail*. And the SABC radio reporting team won the South African Union of Journalists' Pringle Award for their TRC reportage.

<sup>9</sup> It won the *Sunday Times* newspaper's Alan Paton Award; the BookData/South African Booksellers' Book of the Year prize; the Hiroshima Foundation for Peace and Culture Award; the Olive Schreiner Award for the best work of prose published between 1998 and 2000; and received an honourable mention in the 1999 Noma Awards for Publishing in Africa. It also appears as one of “Africa's 100 Best Books of the Twentieth Century” and has been adapted into a film, *In My Country*, 2005, directed by John Boorman. *Country of My Skull* is widely prescribed at universities in the US and Europe in curricula dealing with South Africa and is often the single textbook on the post-apartheid situation in history courses.





rough and by the media. In December of 1997 she was named by the *Mail&Guardian* one of the “next hot one hundred South Africans” – “the people who are set to influence (and are influenced by) the way we live and the issues which we debate”, in 1999 the women’s magazine *Femina* put her at number 39 on their list of “women who shook South Africa”, and in 2004 she was named 75th on the SABC’s list of the “100 Greatest South Africans”. In the South African publishers’ listing of the “Top Ten Titles in the Decade of Democracy 1994-2004”, Krog has two books – *Country of My Skull* and *A Change of Tongue*. And highly-respected public figure Jakes Gerwel, a presidential advisor to Nelson Mandela, remarked in *Rapport*<sup>10</sup>:

If I have to find among Afrikaans thinkers one who I would call an “African intellectual”, it is her. I have been so formed as a ‘Western’ intellectual; that it is Antjie Krog who, every time I read her, challenges me to acknowledge the restrictions of that formation and to address them. Few other Afrikaans thinkers dig so deeply and insistently about Africa and the moral and intellectual challenges of our continent and land (Gerwel, 2007).

And, as has become a hallmark in Krog’s relationship with the media, she is not only the object of media attention but also continues to be a commentator and opinion writer who weighs into national debates<sup>11</sup>. To the public recognition of Krog is added the attention of politicians. This is demonstrated by more than just the quoting of her work publicly. In June of 2003 Krog was selected as part of a panel of “eminent South Africans” to advise President Mbeki on appointments to the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities.

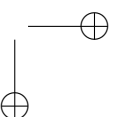
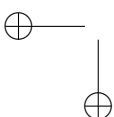
Now in her 50s, Krog plays a powerful, public role in the new democratic South Africa – and beyond. As a white, Afrikaans woman in identity-preoccupied and -perplexed, post-apartheid South Africa – Krog has come to speak to, for and about this nation.

## The infusion of affect.

As is evident in Krog’s literary and journalistic contributions, the infusion of affect into public debate about critical issues affecting South Africans, the focus on

<sup>10</sup> A major Afrikaans-language Sunday newspaper.

<sup>11</sup> For example, in 2000 she made a plea for “white action” at the Human Rights Commission Racism Conference and then followed this up in the *Cape Times* of 8 September by calling for whites to “make one single fateful gesture”. And in 2006 when former apartheid Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok symbolically washed the feet of ANC activist Frank Chikane, causing an outraged public reaction, Krog appealed for “A space for the disgraced” (*Mail&Guardian* 15-21 September). When a popular Afrikaans song calling for Boer War hero General de la Rey to come and lead his people sparked controversy Krog weighed into the debate writing “De la Rey: Afrikaner Absolution” for the *Mail&Guardian* (30 March-4 April 2007: 23).



the situatedness of the body, and the activation of the confessional are hallmarks of the post-apartheid South African public sphere – and necessarily so, given the politics and concerns around equal citizenship and reconstruction of peaceful, functional nationhood. In post-apartheid, post-repressive South Africa, when the aims of nation-building and the democratic project often call into doubt who is an “authentic South African citizen” (Chipkin, 2007, 2008) and who has the right to speak truth to power – this poet/journalist/book author has crafted both platform and voice in order to speak authoritatively in public. Krog’s public voice is adaptable and durable and has been so during tumultuous political and social upheaval in which white, and especially Afrikaans-speaking white, people have been dispossessed of political and social power.

The characteristics of Krog’s public performance – her contributions in public via her books, talks, addresses at conferences and interjections through the media – can be found in her crafting of a particular persona, first as a poet and then as a journalist-author. Literary theorists remark that Krog the poet crafted an identity and an idiolect that was completely distinctive (as is described by Bourdieu talking about the literary field 2005). Both Tom Gouws (1998) and Louise Viljoen (2007) show that what defines Krog’s writings and public contributions is her preoccupation and ongoing experimentation with the self as an instrument and medium – a preoccupation with adaptive subjectivity responding to the complexity of the social-political environment. Krog has always used the aesthetic to deal with the political and made use of the political for the purposes of the aesthetic (Viljoen, 2006). For a writer, Krog has a particularly interesting commitment to the orality of poetry and therefore also to performance, the social uses of writing and even the social relevance of her writings (Viljoen, 2006). What is particularly marked about Krog’s public engagements and writings is her fearlessness about extremity in both experience and feeling and a risk-taking in displaying affect. Viljoen says Krog is attracted to “fury and violence” (Viljoen, 2006) and Leon de Kock has characterised Krog as:

... an extraordinary, versatile, provocative and messy poet. She messes with proprieties both sexual and political... she continues to be both publicly personal... and very personally public (De Kock, 2000).

These hallmarks: self-preoccupation and subjectivity, the importance of performance and social effects, the probing and provoking of the relationship between aesthetic and political, and the embrace of extreme affect, are all evident as Krog moves from poetry, into news journalism and then into book writing. Her unapologetic, affectual relationship with both experience and language then spills over from her writing and becomes a hallmark too of her public engagements. Krog’s developing of her ‘sensory equipment’ (as she called it in a radio interview 1994) to sharpen her ability to receive experiences and then translate those into words and performance,

while completely normative within the poetic field, is an alien method of self-crafting for a journalist and even for a public intellectual performance styled on the normative Habermasian rational-critical interlocutor. Nevertheless, Krog is consistently autobiographical in her reception of politically-charged experiences and involved with the self as the medium to write and to engage publically. As Gillian Whitlock points out, *Country of My Skull* personalises history and historicises the personal, it places the self in relation to public history and culture, and thereby enables ethical self-reflection (Whitlock, 2007).

Krog's style of public engagement is to take into herself ideas, thoughts, feelings and fragments of experience, her own and others'. She cannibalises and then uses them as raw material for poetry (which she is always engaged with regardless of what genre she is actually working in – poetic language is, she says, "an incarnation of the plasticity of human being", Krog 2005: 104). The resulting product is usually her self, the altered, affected human being, responding ethically to the demand by the Others of South Africa for recognition and admission of complicity in exclusionary practices. This is represented in her writing. Titles like *Country of My Skull* and *Begging to be Black* and remarks like "I am busy with the truth, my truth" (Krog, 1998) are indications that the site, vehicle and repository of Krog's engagement with the big issues of public importance is Krog herself.

...if I say the word "I", I call forth a "you". You have to respond. And you will allow me to access you under your own conditions, with your own ambiguities and fractious facts. But if the "you" who is not "I", responds, then you and I can at last starting trying to find "us" as well as "he" or "she" or "they" (Krog, 2005).

South Africa has produced many great writers, whose work and voices have moved beyond the literary domain and into public, political life, often at crucial moments politically and socially. But in most cases it is the symbolic capital of the literary field which allows them to be heard, called upon or quoted. Krog, has a mobility across fields, and a facility to inject into public her opinions and voice (often when she chooses to do so), that is substantially different from the usual behaviour of authors in public space and via the media. When compared, for example, with the fraught relationship another dissident poet, Breyten Breytenbach<sup>12</sup>, has had with the media, the Afrikaner volk and the present-day ANC leadership, Krog's relationship with the news media has worked powerfully to advance her standing within the Afrikaans community and Afrikaans literary establishment, and then enabled her to transcend this community as her public when she began to work in English and was taken up as a representative voice of the post-apartheid South Africa by English-language media

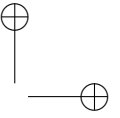
<sup>12</sup> After being jailed for anti-government activities Breytenbach went into exile in Paris. He was involved in the talks that brought South African thinkers together with the ANC and which brokered a transition in South Africa. But he remains in Europe and has a complex relationship with the ANC government now in power.

and a publishing house. Krog continues to be able to use her specificity as an Afrikaner (in producing poetry and translations in Afrikaans), but has acquired the power to also speak for the interests of the new South African nation, both here and abroad. This ability is precisely because of a double-sided relationship with the media: with their particular treatment of her as a newsmaker, their framing of her as valuable and important and of us (even as this 'us' was enlarged into the new nation), and her use of and involvement in the media both as a journalist and agenda-setter. This sets her apart from other writers who enter the public domain and marks her as a person who has acquired 'media meta-capital' (in the words of Nick Couldry, 2003) and uses it.

From the reportage on Krog's life, person and writing it is evident that she receives not just the acclaim of the literary and media field consecrators and the acclaim of the dominant classes that sanction 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1983) but she also the acclaim of a mass audience. Krog demonstrates the Bourdieu supposition that an individual who accumulates both cultural and economic capital within a field is able to take the resulting symbolic capital and convert it into forms of capital acknowledged as valuable in other fields (Bourdieu, 2002). Krog has acquired "prestige", "celebrity" and "honour" (Johnson's introduction in Bourdieu, 1993). As a result Krog has the "almost magical power of mobilisation", the "power to construct reality" (Bourdieu, 2002), which has effects on other fields, and across the social landscape. Krog has become part of the "general culture" through a "process of familiarisation" with the mass audience (Bourdieu and Nice, 1980). As Tom Gouws has commented, Krog is a "contemporary people's poet", a "forceful and innovative figure", and even a "cult figure" (Gouws, 1998).

Krog has become a representative South African reflecting the country's peaceful transition to the world. But as a transformed Afrikaner with a platform to speak in this country she is also an "authentic citizen", one who performs Africanness and commitment to Africa. Ivor Chipkin (2008, 2007) shows that the ANC control of the South African government since 1994, and more particularly between 1999 and 2008 when Mbeki was president, resulted in a state in which the African nationalist project was paramount. Anxiety about belonging and identity permeates Krog's poetry and writings, but her reaction is not to assert in public (in rational-critical mode) her "Africanness" (as others have done<sup>13</sup>), but to enact it. This she does by performing the guilty, complicit, contrite and petitioning subject who knows that authenticity as a South African citizen can only be granted to a white person by the previously damaged and dispossessed. And, as Chipkin, points out most clearly, while the millions of South African poor are intended to be the recipients and beneficiaries of the new democracy, those with the actual power to define democracy and decide on its delivery

<sup>13</sup> Notably Fredrik van Zyl Slabbert, Afrikaner and former politician who convened the Afrikaner-ANC delegations with Breytenbach in 1989, and who gave a public lecture in 2006 called "I too am an African. If not, why not?" ([http://www.public-conversations.org.za/pdfs/slabbert\\_lecture.pdf](http://www.public-conversations.org.za/pdfs/slabbert_lecture.pdf) accessed 21 August 2008.)



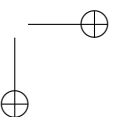
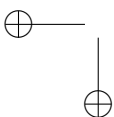
are an elite in whom “Africanness” as the marker of authenticity is key. If Krog wants her performance to have the ring of authenticity then she must perform authenticity in a way that captures the attention of the carriers of the new South African democratic project. Hence the very high value of the attention paid to her poetry by Thabo Mbeki in his presidential speech in 2002<sup>14</sup> and the public acclamation by Jakes Gerwel in his newspaper piece (2007).

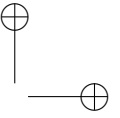
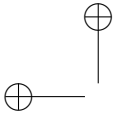
### **The affectedness of Others.**

The study of Krog’s position as a public figure in post-apartheid South Africa shows very clearly that it is not because she enters the public domain as a Saidian-type intellectual “speaking truth to power”. Many commentators in South Africa’s public domains (writers, journalists, researchers, political analysts) set themselves up deliberately to “speak truth to power” and to emulate the rational-critical formulations of a persuasive argument and a faculty for representation (as espoused by Said, 1994 and described by Habermas, 1991). But Krog is not this kind of public figure. Her style of operation is to use the literary and its formulations of public address, and the licence literary styles and devices provide, and to bend this to her particular purposes. She continues the TRC work she did as a journalist through her poetry, curations, collections, translations and other writings. Unlike commentators like newspaper columnist Xolela Mangcu, who boldly self-describes as a “public intellectual”, she never does so. Her firm location in the literary – coupled to her reach way beyond the literary field – gives Krog the freedom to continue to use literary tropes and techniques to perform the responsibilities of new South African citizenship in public. She uses the autobiographic and the personal to deftly craft a public persona for herself which shows itself to be responsive to national concerns of damage and discrimination, access to voice and the crafting of a democracy that gives rights and benefits to the majority of South Africans.

This public person not only reacts to the affectedness of Others who have been marginalised but is affected herself by these struggles and shows herself to be so. If the public sphere is the arena in which the key questions of the day are thrashed out, then what – and how – does Antjie Krog contribute to debate around these questions? Of the multiple issues and debates taking place in our public sphere, the single most pressing question, which infects all others, is the question of who counts as an authentic South African citizen. Essentially Krog contributes a performance of

<sup>14</sup>In which he said: “Urging us to start anew as one people, ‘to shiver in the colour of human’, the poet and writer Antjie Krog has written...” and then quoted from “Land van genade en verdriet” [Land of grace and sorrow] (Krog 2000: 43). He then went on to say: “It is as South Africans, who share a common nationhood and destiny, that we have to continue to address the issue of national reconciliation and the building of a non-racial South Africa...”





contrition, guilt, culpability, complicity. By bearing the burden of the guilt of the Afrikaner nation; by saying the words laden with emotion that are not usually used in rational-critical discourse, she sets the terms of inclusion for white South Africans into authentic citizenship. While many other white South Africans assert their citizenship and identity as South Africans (or more pointedly as ‘Africans’) by invoking their legal or constitutional status, Krog demonstrates her subject status as an “authentic member of the nation”.

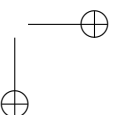
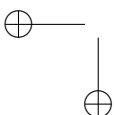
The importance in South African public intellectual work of renegotiating the self into a new community, has been explored by Mark Sanders (2002). He points out that when the national society to which one belongs has been constructed at every level by racial exclusion, the intellectual, even in opposition, is shaped by this social structure. If the intellectual is a white beneficiary there must be recognition that one is a “little perpetrator”, if black, the intellectual is negotiating “mental complicity” (as in the case of Biko). Sanders argues that the South African intellectual “identifies [as complicit in apartheid] in order to dis-identify”, but this is only the first step. He then activates a second definition of complicity which he reads as “a folded-together-ness – in human-being”. He sees in his exploration of South African public intellectuals, an affirmation of that larger complicity – the “being of being human” which then drives their intellectual projects. In response to Sanders Krog insists that her task is to “insist on responsibility for the stranger as constitutive of collectivity itself” (Krog, 2005). She then asks:

Is it possible to extend this to writing? May one say that in an era of over-individualisation and self-estrangement, it is crucial to allow the self to reintegrate so that the self is no longer the stranger (Krog, 2005).

## Conclusion.

As a study of Krog shows, the nature of the post-apartheid, public sphere is that it is permeated by performances of affect which are used to surface issues and experiences that are not able to be captured by the “logos-centred rationales for deliberative democracy” (Huspek, 2007). That those who speak into it are no longer necessarily public intellectuals in the strict Saidian sense, and that it is profoundly affected by issues and events beyond its boundaries. Not only is the bounded sense of a national polity and citizenry within a national public sphere being challenged by globalised forces and flows of communication, but the question of what it is to be a responsible, 21<sup>st</sup> century, human subject now is extremely pertinent.

The crucial difference between a Saidian-style intellectual and a performance like Krog’s is that in the former case, the authority to speak rests largely on recognised excellence as an author and his facility to represent a particular issue and/or



people. In the case of Krog, while recognised excellence as an author and capacity to represent are still important, to these must be added the requirements of the regime of human rights and a performance which demonstrates affectedness, implication and connection to other suffering bodies.

Krog's is not a classic performance of opposition – not a speaking truth to power, it is not the antithesis to the state's thesis in a dialectical public debate. Krog's is a presentation of affect and effect in which the personal and political are entwined. Krog shows a public how an individual, in a complex, rapidly-altering political situation, negotiates an adaptive subjectivity as the primary means of ethical agency. In a reformulation of the much-used Saidian phrase: Krog speaks poetry to power – “poetry” understood as aestheticised and affected embodied communication, “power” understood not just as the political entities in formal government but also structuration that excludes and alienates.

## References.

- BOURDIEU, Pierre. “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field” in Benson, Rodney and Neveu, Erik (eds). *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. “The Field of Cultural Production, or: the Economic World Reversed.” *Poetics* 12(4-5), 1983.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre and NICE, Richard. “The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods.” *Media, Culture and Society* 2, 1980.
- CHIPKIN, Ivor. “Democracy's People.” Presented at the Paradoxes of the Post-Colonial Public Sphere: South African Democracy at the Crossroads” conference, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 28-31 January 2008.
- CHIPKIN, Ivor. *Do South Africans Exist? Nationalism, Democracy and the Identity of 'The People'*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2007.
- COULDRY, Nick. “Media Meta-Capital: Extending the Range of Bourdieu's Field Theory.” *Theory and Society* 32, 2003.
- DE KOCK, Leon. “Voices of the earth.” *Mail&Guardian* 17-23 November 2000.

- GERWEL, Jakes. "Laat ons met mekaar verskil sonder om te skel." *Rapport* 11 November 2007.
- GOUWS, Tom. "Antjie Krog (1952 – )" in Van Coller, HP (ed). *Perspektief & Profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*. Pretoria: JL van Schaik, 1998.
- HABERMAS, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.
- HAMILTON, Carolyn. "Uncertain Citizenship and Contemporary Public Deliberation: Social Inequality, Cultural Diversity and a Compromised Commitment to Complexity in Post-apartheid South Africa." Presented at the Paradoxes of the Post-Colonial Public Sphere: South African Democracy at the Crossroads" conference, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 28-31 January 2008.
- HUSPEK, Michael. "Symposium: Habermas and Deliberative Democracy: Introductory Remarks." *Communication Theory* 17(4), 2007.
- KROG, Antjie. "I, Me, Mine!: Autobiographical Fiction and the 'I'." *English Academy Review*, 22, 2005.
- KROG, Antjie. *Country of My Skull*. Cape Town: Random House, 1998.
- KROG, Antjie. "Overwhelming trauma of the truth." *Mail&Guardian*, 24 December 1996.
- KROG, Antjie. Interview with Joan Hambidge. Radio South Africa, 24 July 1994.
- MALAN, Rian. "A guilt-stricken orgy of self-flagellation." *Financial Mail*, 2-8 July 1998.
- MBEKI, Thabo. Statement at the conclusion of the debate on *The State of the Nation Address*, National Assembly, 14 February 2002. <http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/speeches/2002/mbek0214.htm> accessed 7 May 2011.
- SAID, Edward W. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- SANDERS, Mark. *Complicities: the Intellectual and Apartheid*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press, 2002.
- SANDERS, Mark. "Truth, Telling, Questioning: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Antjie Krog's Country of My Skull, and Literature after Apartheid." *Modern Fiction Studies*, Spring 46(1), 2000.



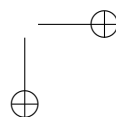
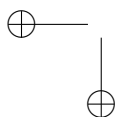
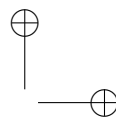
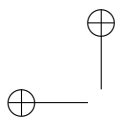
“The Sociology of the Public Discourse: Part 1 The Cloud with the Silver Lining.”  
*ANC Today*. Volume 5 number 2. 14-20 January 2005. <http://www.anc.org.za/docs/anctoday/2005/at02.htm>, accessed 6 May 2011.

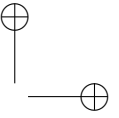
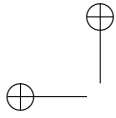
“The Sociology of the Public Discourse: Part 2 Who shall set the National Agenda?”  
*ANC Today*. Volume 5 number 3. 21-27 January. 2005. <http://www.anc.org.za/docs/anctoday/2005/at03.htm>, accessed 6 May 2011.

VILJOEN, Louise. “The Mother as Pre-text: (Auto)biographical Writing in Antjie Krog’s *A Change of Tongue*.” *Current Writing*, 19(2), 2007.

VILJOEN, Louise. “Translation and Transformation: Antjie Krog’s Translation of Indigenous South African Verse into Afrikaans.” *Scrutiny*2, 11(1), 2006.

WHITLOCK, Gillian. *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007.





# Community media and public accountability.

Manuela Grünangerl

## Abstract.

The flexibility of role assignments that leads to a fluctuating exchange between media producers, story providers and audience, is characteristic for community media. This is not only an option but a basic condition of community media. Public accountability is therefore strongly shaped by what is defined as “community” by the media institution itself. This citizen-centered approach is not only bound to the audience but can be found on all organizational levels of community media institutions. It widens the reference and action framework of community media and also evokes analytical efforts in research on community media. Therefore, comparison to “classic” media institutions can become difficult and extended analytical requirements have to be considered. With reference to theoretical considerations on public accountability of media in democratic societies and the concepts of participation and access this article summarizes academic and policy debates on the terminology of community media research. In addition, it presents some analytical considerations on a research project whose objective is to elaborate insight into the social benefits of community media by using an integrative approach.

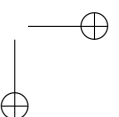
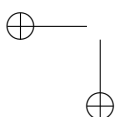
**Key-words:** democracy, public accountability, community media, comparative research, multi-method-design

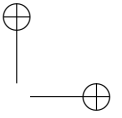
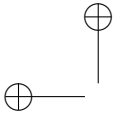
## Introduction.

Agreement should exist on the centrality of the press for democracy. Nevertheless, what this should mean in practice, either for the professional role of journalists or for legal policy related to the media, awaits clarification of the cardinal notion of democracy – and this concept, it turns out, is widely contested. (Baker, 2002, p.113)

What Baker states in the quotation above for the press can also be observed in other media sectors and is not only limited to traditional news production alone. However, the normative debate on the role of media in and for democracy is still centered on the classical concept of journalistic news formats neglecting the possible significance of cultural or entertainment media content for democratic processes.

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices, 107-117*



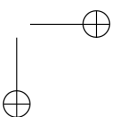
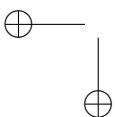


The focus rather lies on top-down communication from traditional media institutions circulated through classic journalistic structures. Bottom-up communication or more circulating forms of information distribution and exchange are still marginalized. However, democracy does not only require the transmission of information through media; this information should also be equally accessible by everyone and provide a certain form of control of those who are in power (Habermas 2008:141; what this means in the context of different media systems cf. Strömbäck 2005; Baker 2002). Community communication is more about sharing than transmitting information. For many alternative media forms – in public and policy debates often discussed as “the third sector” or under the label “community media” – a self-regulatory process is intrinsically linked to the self-conception. A core condition of community media is that role assignments are more flexible encouraging audience members to become their own content producers and story providers. This citizen-centered approach of democratic objectives is directly linked to their understanding of the reference groups as some kind of community, defined by social connectedness through common background, habits or interests of a certain kind no matter if it is on a local, cultural, national or trans-national level. Such forms of media companies, which put more emphasis on participation in and free access to communication processes rather than on the plain distribution aspect, are the target of the following considerations.

The following chapters, however, will also discuss how community media research still lacks on theoretical and analytical frameworks capable of capturing those working processes including their interrelations. The definition of what is meant by “community” is therefore crucial, though far from being consistent or beyond dispute. Not even the use of the term “community media” as a research subject is supported by all media researchers, different terms such as “citizens’ media”, “alternative media”, “radical media” or “activist media” are also used even if they only partly imply different conceptualizations of media organizations. This does not only obstruct policy debates but is also a burden when it comes to comparative research designs.

## **Participation and access to information as key concepts.**

Media and public sphere are intrinsically linked in normative theory as the establishment of the latter is considered a key target of the former and is therefore seen as guarantee of the functioning of democracy itself (Christians et al., 2009, p. 116). Even though consensus can be assumed concerning the core relevance of mediated communication for democratic life (Baker, 2002, p.113), it stays unclear what this means in terms of professional journalistic implications and on the level of media policy and therefore is interpreted in many different ways in different (national) media systems. This emphasizes the interrelation of democratic and media structures and leads to the theoretical necessity of differentiation of models of democracy (cf. Held,



2006; Cunningham, 2008; Lijphart, 1999) also highly relevant for the classification of media systems (cf. Strömbäck, 2005; Baker, 2002). Even though the emphasis on certain values and tasks media should promote and fulfill might differ from one model to the other, normative conceptions of the functions of media for democracy are to a certain extent inherent to all democratic societies.

A particular status is attributed to media institutions in democratic societies, shaping the relationship of media, politics, economy and civil society<sup>1</sup>. This combination of specific rights and duties does not only set the framework of action for media in society but also the outline of the public accountability of media actions linked to the public benefits they should provide. “The media therefore act as trustees for this fundamental civic right. With it, however, comes an increased level of public accountability. Media cannot interpret their freedom of expression as absolute freedom to act in their own interest.” (Nieminen & Trappel, 2011, p.141) This public accountability should be secured through a set of laws, regulations and internal rules often reflected from the media organization’s mission statement to institutionalized evaluation processes on the media’s benefits for society.

Information, articulation and participation as main functions of news production are not limited to “classic” media institutions or sectors alone, which are obliged to fulfill such targets by legal or corporate rules such as a public service remit. The legitimation framework of community media is bound to the concept of citizenship as the democratic ideal of participation is considered to be preliminary on all structural levels. Similar to public service media providing social benefits is the preliminary aim of community media. While for public service media society as a whole is the reference group, community media see themselves responsible for only one particular group in society which they define as their community. These benevolent intentions concerning the defined community, however, are (intentionally) hardly embedded in legally binding rules as strong as the public service remit. On the one hand this is owed to the self-definition of the community as a reference group including the tasks this community is in need of and that can be fulfilled by media. In a positive way this enables more flexible working processes and more individual content production structures. It has an impact on the way information gets shared putting the participants of this process in more equal positions.

Thus, community media provide a more citizen-centered understanding of their own democratic role in general but also how those citizens exercise their participation rights: „(...) to engage in democracy normally does not mean to step out of one’s existing frames of realities, or one’s dominant habitus.“ (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 149) The direct involvement of community members on all levels of news production without differentiating according to classic role models can therefore once again be interpreted as a direct integration of the community member’s realities into media

<sup>1</sup> McQuail (2010, pp.218-222) gives a brief overview of how this relationship can be conceptualized.

production. Nevertheless, the lack of institutionalization and liability makes it more difficult to analyze if community media is really able to meet its self-defined commitments. This is not only a problem on the research and evaluation level but also in policy debates as it weakens the position of community media in comparison to public service media and even to commercial media. The question how community media fulfill their social tasks by realizing their normative intentions in every day practice is far from being solved. Just as little is the question on what this means in the context of citizenship and political participation. Therefore it is crucial that the term community media is defined in detail not only in contrast to public service media and commercial media but also confronting similar concepts of alternatives to the traditional dualistic view beyond financing and ownership structures. The heterogeneity of this research field deriving from the lack of institutionalization of the targeted media organizations and the fact that research in this area has been carried out from very different angles both by media scholars and media activists, bears the problem that terminology is inconsistent, too. Couldry (2010, p.24f) identifies terminology as a “key dimension” in alternative media research. Two main questions become central: what kind of media should be studied and what processes of media production and consumption should be investigated (Kidd & Rodriguez, 2010, p. 11f).

## Public and scientific debates on terminology.

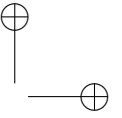
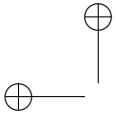
Community media as a term is present in both areas, in academic debates as well as in policy debates around the globe. For interest groups like CMFE (Community Media Forum Europe) or AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcaster) and many more national and local initiatives the main aim is to strengthen the position of the so-called third sector in national and international policy commitments. Therefore, the term community media is prevalent concerning legal and structural debates as it was also used by two big supranational political institutions in the recent years: the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. Both have recently published resolutions underlining the role of community media in and for society and social development<sup>2</sup>.

The report of the European Parliament, which was elaborated by the “Committee on Culture and Education on Community Media in Europe” and finally published in 2008 contains among other aspects a definition of community media (with a short link to the term alternative media) underlining financing, accountability and participation: “Community or alternative media (‘CM’) can be defined as: media that are non-profit and accountable to the community that they seek to serve. They are open to participation in the creation of content by members of the community. As such, they are a

<sup>2</sup> For a brief overview of the representation of community media in EU communication policies since 2004 see Reguero Jiménez & Sanmartín Navarro (2009).

distinct group within the media sector alongside commercial and public media.” (EU-Parliament, 2008, p. 9) Furthermore, the social benefit intention of community media is stressed as much as its potential contribution to social cohesion, identity building and the promotion of diversity. Similar to this the Council of Europe’s “Declaration on the role of community media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue” which was published in 2009 exclusively uses the term community media. More than the EU-resolution the Council of Europe declares community media as being “by their very nature (...) close to their audience” (Council of Europe, 2009) attributing (without going into detail) functions to community media that cannot be fulfilled by either commercial or public service media. Both have in common the recognition of the community media sector as a distinct third sector in opposition to the commercial and the public service sector which is in line with above mentioned main aims of the interest groups. This distinction is mainly made referring to the financing situation of community media defining them as strictly non-profit organizations. Nevertheless, it also leads to the ascertainment of the necessity for further examination of these social functions in order to adapt adequate legal frameworks for the community media sector. Therefore both papers – implicitly and explicitly – call for further research on this topic to clarify how this democratic and social role can be conceptualized.

In academic debates, however, other terms are also used to denominate similar media institutions, depending on the indicators recognized as prevalent for typology. The term “alternative media”, as it is among others used by Chris Atton, refers to the concept of opposing what is seen as mainstream media and therefore to the assumption of a misrepresentation of groups or opinions in society through mainstream media. It is, therefore, a critique on a prevailing imbalance of media power (cf. Atton, 2011, p. 15; Atton, 2002). In addition, on the level of news production it implies the involvement of none-professionals in media production giving alternative media a more amateur image focusing on the participation-motives of such media initiatives. Similar to this is the term “radical media”, in particular shaped by the work of John Downing, referring rather to social activism and social change as main intentions of alternative media initiatives (Downing, 2001). Another term is “citizens’ media” introduced into academic debate by Clemencia Rodriguez. She argues that citizens’ media is “as a term better able to capture processes of social change and democratization facilitated by alternative or community media. This defines media on the basis of their potential to trigger processes of social change” (Rodriguez 2011: 99f). Her critique on the similar concepts of community media and alternative media, which she objects, is that the definition of the former is too much focused on the producers or structural aspects such as ownership, license grants, etc. and the latter is negatively articulated (by what it is not). Her criteria, on the contrary, for defining media institutions as citizen’s media is that they “promote symbolic processes that allow people to



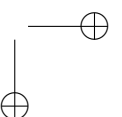
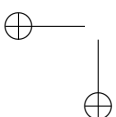
name the world and speak the world in their own terms” (Rodriguez, 2011, p. 100). Nevertheless, this definition of the term citizens’ media is disputable as it requires pre-existing values and evaluation of democratic intentions and potential of media institutions without providing defined criteria for that. Moreover, the connotation to the also ideologically loaded concept of citizenry could be identified as problematic (see also: Kidd & Rodriguez, 2010, p. 13).

The term used in the title of this paper and preferred for the analytical considerations – community media – however can indeed be seen as a very useful concept for contextualizing research for several reasons. First, as shown above, it is the prevailing term used in policy debates and therefore also publicly widely known. The same can indeed be noticed in academic research in particular when research projects include media practitioners in their discussion (cf. for example Lewis & Jones, 2006; Howley, 2010). So, even if differences between community media organizations apparently make systematization somehow difficult Rennie (2006) notes that there are some common concepts that are valid for most community media organizations. “The terms ‘participation’ and ‘access’ apply to most community media endeavors, meaning that non-professional media makers are encouraged to become involved (participation), providing individuals and communities with a platform to express their views (access).” (Rennie, 2006, p. 3) Linkages to the concepts of alternative and radical media are obvious. Rennie (2006, p. 10) classifies the idea behind community media projects as “alternative” opposing it once more to public service media.

For community media research, though, a primary decision on the terms used must be made including a definition what criteria are most important for classifying a medium as community media. How community relations and actions can be analyzed and visualized requires not only theoretical inputs but also empirical efforts. Some consideration will be made in the following chapter.

## **Empirical challenges of a complex analytical framework.**

Keeping in mind the particular circumstances of media production in community media organizations and the difficulty on obtaining (official) data on community media performance (Buckley et al., 2008, p. 240f) the analytical framework of community media research is complex. The lack of institutionalization and the interrelation and exchange of roles on different organizational levels requires extended efforts concerning an adequate combination of research methods. The advantages of comparative research are, moreover, obvious: “The comparative approaches all effectively act to reveal important dimensions and dynamics across each set of practices” (Kidd & Rodriguez, 2010, p. 11). Hollander (2000:375f) notes that community media research has to be carried out at least on two levels: the level of the individuals







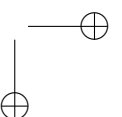
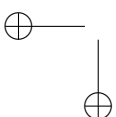
and the level of the social system the medium is operating in. As a consequence, he identifies four research dimensions: community characteristics, community media landscape, individual characteristics and community media use by individuals. Community media research requires (even more than usual media research) to focus on the interrelation between sender, message and receiver as all roles might be carried out by the same individual. What is, however, still missing in this four-dimensional-model is the integration of working and recruiting processes of community media as well as content-related research.

Concluding that in particular these relational aspects must be taken into account, a multi-method-design is inevitable for research projects on community media. The following considerations summarize briefly some ideas on how different methods could be used for different purposes, without claiming completeness or exclusivity:

First, community media research must start with an analysis of the structural level of the community media sector. Structural constraints cannot only be found on a national level, but start with international (e.g. European) policy debates on the role of community media for society as already discussed above. The status of a third media sector is not a given fact in all countries but crucial to the organizational structure of community media in particular concerning ownership and financial structures. Therefore, the cultural, economic and political circumstances of community media institutions must be examined. This does not only include formal rules such as laws and policy commitments but also informal constraints shaping the framework for action community media in a certain area. Methodologically this requires policy analysis to systematically analyze formal rules complemented by (qualitative) interviews with stakeholders focusing rather on informal rules in this field.

Second, the context of media production processes must be considered. The main focus in this case lies on *how* media content is produced, selected and shared. In analogy to journalistic role models for professional media producers, motives and intentions of community members for participating in the media production process themselves shall be explored referring to their own particular “journalistic mission”. As community media by definition underline their social benefit intentions promoting democratic citizenship, characteristics such as the personal background, education or prior media experience of media producers are relevant indicators. Furthermore, processes of editorial responsibility and supervision by community media professionals must be considered. This does also imply potential forms of self-evaluation of community media institutions in the sense of legitimizing their public accountability. In addition to the analysis of self-declaration papers or mission statements, if available, research designs must therefore include at least (qualitative) interviews with content producers and editorial staff of community media institutions.

Third, the content level must be taken into consideration focusing in particular on the range of topics covered by community media reporting. An analysis of the me-



dia output is on the one hand the direct consequence of the analysis of the structural and production context; on the other hand the development of criteria on community media content and programming (in particular concerning its possible contribution to democratic ideals) is a prerequisite for the investigation of audiences and reception. Therefore, strategies for content analysis (in more detail on the availability and frequency of democracy-related topics) must be developed.

Fourth, the audience level of community media must be examined. Due to the (self-chosen) lack of institutionalization, professionalization and the commitment to a more or less limited community as reference group audience research of community media requires different dimensions than for public service media or commercial media. Plain audience figures and quantitative ratings cannot be the only adequate measuring method. Central is the question *why* community media content is used and even preferred to reporting in mainstream media (public service and commercial). This requires the discussion of motives and uses of reception regarding in particular social benefit and value of community media content. To achieve this audience members of community media must be interviewed, as well.

Eventually, in an ideal research situation, research projects must consider all these levels of analysis and the interrelations between them owed to the special structures of community media concerning both individual role-definition and collective intentions. The combination of research methods in a multi-method-design and the selection of community media institutions in different countries following a most-different-system-approach would enable not only insight in community media working processes of some particular institutions but also allow interpretations on the social benefits of community media in the context of democratic citizenship and political participation.

## **Reflections and Conclusions: opportunities and limits of empirical media research.**

Summarizing the main points, the term community media can be used on different levels. On a structural level it explains organizational particularities of media (ownership structures, financing structures) placing them in contrast to public service and commercial media. Moreover, it refers to the specific reference group of those media organizations – their self-defined community. In addition, this community – in form of its members – is not only main target of the program but also its producer and transmitter. “Community Media, being a media that is produced by civil society groups, has a unique relationship to the types of citizen participation that occur through civil society engagement.” (Rennie, 2006, p. 34) In particular those inter-relational processes are outstanding particularities of community media. The link to

main values of democracy such as participation, access and civil society build the framework for the assumption of social benefits of community media. However, benefits cannot easily be proven in particular when adequate methodology is lacking (see also: Buckley et al. 2008, p. 242f).

Due to this multi-level structure of community media research should also be carried out on different levels using diverse methods. In comparative perspective, the realization of normative democratic tasks in community media can best be analyzed in several case studies with a mixed-method-design as it was described above. Nevertheless, two main points must be considered: First, before starting with the development of research methods extended theoretical efforts must be undertaken to systemically make clearance on the framework of public accountability and social benefit of community media. This includes assuring that terminology is distinct enough to enable comparative research without getting lost in diverse connotations of terms. Second, the ideal research situation and the requirements for analysis of the above mentioned different levels and (even more important) the interrelations between levels and roles must be critically and pragmatically reflected in terms of their feasibility in the actual research situation.

## References

- ATTON, Chris, *Alternative Media*, In: Downing, John D. H. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of social movement media*. Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC, SAGE, 2011, pp. 15-19.
- ATTON, Chris, *Alternative Media*, London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi, SAGE, 2002.
- BAKER, C. Edwin, *Media, Markets, and Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- BUCKLEY, Steve/DUER, Kreszentia/MENDEL, Toby/Ó SIOCHRÚ, Seán/PRICE, Monroe E./RABOY, Mark, *Broadcasting, Voice, and Accountability. A Public Interest Approach to Policy, Law, and Regulation*. Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- CHRISTIANS, Clifford G., GLASSER, Theodore L., MCQUAIL, Denis, NORDENSTRENG, Kaarle, WHITE, Robert A., *Normative Theories of the Media. Journalism in Democratic Societies*, Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the role of community media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue*,

2009, online at [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media/news/CMDec\\_Community\\_media\\_110209\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media/news/CMDec_Community_media_110209_en.asp), accessed 2011/04/02.

COULDRY, Nick, *Section I. Pushing Theoretical Boundaries. Introduction*. In: Rodríguez, Clemencia/Kidd, Dorothy/Stein, Laura (eds) *Making Our Media. Global Initiatives Toward a Democratic Public Sphere. Volume I*. Cresskill, Hampton Press, 2010, pp. 24-28.

CUNNINGHAM, Frank, *Theories of Democracy. A Critical Introduction*, London/New York, Routledge 2008.

DAHLGREN, Peter, *Media and Political Engagement. Citizens, Communication, and Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

DOWNING, John D.H., *Radical Media. Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*, Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi, SAGE, 2001.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, *Report on Community Media in Europe*, 2008,  
Online at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2008-0263+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>, accessed on 2011/03/21.

HABERMAS, Jürgen, *Hat die Demokratie noch eine epistemische Dimension? Empirische Forschung und normative Theorie*, In: Habermas, Jürgen, Ach, Europa, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 2008, pp. 138-192.

HELD, David, *Models of Democracy*, Third Edition, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2006.

HOLLANDER, Ed, *Online Communities as Community Media. A Theoretical and Analytical Framework for the Study of Digital Community Networks*, In: Communications, vol. 25, nr. 4, 2000, pp. 371-386.

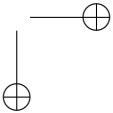
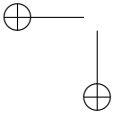
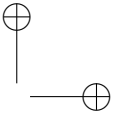
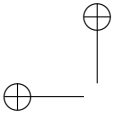
HOWLEY, Kevin (ed.), *Understanding Community Media*, Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC, SAGE, 2010.

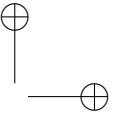
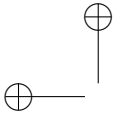
KIDD, Dorothy/RODRIGUEZ, Clemencia, *Volume I. Introduction*. In: Rodríguez, Clemencia/Kidd, Dorothy/Stein, Laura (eds.) *Making Our Media. Global Initiatives Toward a Democratic Public Sphere. Volume I*. Cresskill, Hampton Press, 2010, pp. 1-22.

LEWIS, Peter M./Jones, Susan (eds.), *From the margins to the cutting edge. Community Media and Empowerment*, Cresskill, Hampton Press, 2006.

LIJPHART, Arend, *Patterns of Democracy. Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 1999.

- MCQUAIL, Denis, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC, SAGE, 2010.
- NIEMINEN, Hannu/TRAPPEL, Josef, *Media Serving Democracy*. In: Trappel, Josef/Meier, Werner A./d'Haenens, Leen/Steemers, Jeanette/Thomass, Barbara (eds.) *Media in Europe Today*. Bristol, Intellect, 2011, pp. 135-151.
- REGUERO JIMÉNEZ, Núria/SANMARTÍN NAVARRO, Julián, *Community Media in EU Communication Policies*, In: Observatório (OBS\*), nr. 9, 2009 pp. 186-199.
- RENNIE, Ellie, *Community Media: A Global Introduction*. Toronto, Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.
- RODRIGUEZ, Clemencia, *Citizens' Media*, In: Downing, John D. H. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of social movement media*. Los Angeles / London / New Delhi / Singapore / Washington DC, SAGE, 2011, pp. 98-102.
- STRÖMBÄCK, Jesper, *In Search of a Standard: four models of democracy and their normative implications for journalism*, In: *Journalism Studies*, vol. 6, nr. 3, 2005, pp. 331-345.





## ICT and local public sphere in Poland and Norway.

Ilona Biernacka-Ligieza

### Abstract

Opportunity to enhance governance through improved Internet access to accurate information and transparent, responsive and democratic institutions. The types of services that can be delivered over the internet are still being conceived, developed and improved by both the public and the private sectors. Over the next few years expect to see an increased experimentation, innovation, and organizational learning in an effort to perfect e-government.

At the same time, a growing number of studies indicate that many of these hopes have not been realized, at least not to the extent expected (Hoegler and Schuster 2002; Reddick 2004). These studies concluded that e-government has not revolutionized the way government functions and that governments have not realized the anticipated benefits of cost-savings, improved service delivery, and so forth.

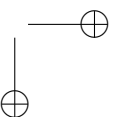
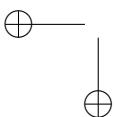
One place to look for answers is in countries that are leaders in information and communications technologies (ICT) and e-government implementation. International surveys place the Scandinavian countries among the more mature in Internet penetration, user experience with IT, and sophistication of e-government services (Dalziel 2004; Hunter and Jupp 2002).

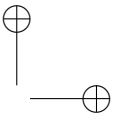
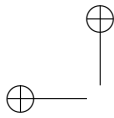
The paper will assesses e-government services at the level of local government in Norway and Poland. The paper is based on the qualitative and quantitative research. For making comparison survey has been carried out in Poland and Norway. It is analysed the case of Lower Silesia and Buskerud, Akershus, Østfold. This comparative study was prepared due to: 1) interviews with politicians; clerks; journalists; entrepreneurs; 2) questionnaires distributed between inhabitants; 3) scientific and statistics reports.

In Norway, the municipality is the government level that has the most direct contact with the citizens and businesses and is responsible for providing an array of basic services. In recent years the municipalities throughout Norway have made considerable efforts to establish and refine their online presence. Still, the functionality and quality of content vary greatly.

In Poland path of e-government development was not so smooth. As findings from the previous research confirm thesis about low e-services development at the beginning and even lack of them in some regions of Poland. Now we can observe the rapid growth of ICT technologies in Poland and its visual impact on the local

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 119-141





democracy shaping process. We can of course discuss both sides of this impact – positive and negative.

According to cases mentioned above the paper will try to present some important digital initiatives being introduced in Poland and Norway on the level of local democracy. There are going to be presented some actions which are being introduced to improve administration and information system as for example: e-commune system (being implemented in different cities – the E-commune is not only presentation of information, but it is mainly "virtual office"); E-participation; E-initiatives (e.g.: Multimedia@Modalen; D:Mo); regional information portals (e.g.: Malopolska Gate; Doba; Wroclaw24 etc.).

**Key words:** local public sphere; ICT; community; municipality; information; participation.

## Paper structure.

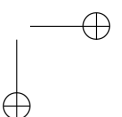
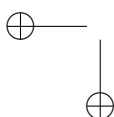
The paper is divided into two parts: theoretical and analytical. At the theory part there are discussed different aspects of building digital public sphere in local community and the analytical part is based on the description of the ICT usage in chosen municipalities

The paper is based on the qualitative, quantitative research and websites content analysis. For comparison, a survey has been carried out in Poland and in Norway. It analysed the case of Lower Silesia; Buskerud, Akershus, Østfold. This comparative study was prepared basing on: 1) interviews with politicians; clerks; journalists; entrepreneurs; 2) questionnaires distributed among inhabitants; 3) research reports; 4) statistics data.

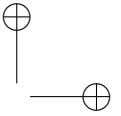
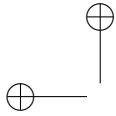
Due to the study mentioned above the following research questions were analysed: Whether and how ICT have changed the functioning of local government in Poland and Norway? Does ICT support political communication? Is ICT used as platform for local debate? Is ICT used mainly as a tool for transmitting information from the dominant one-sided communication? Does ICT support local democracy?

## The Digital Public Sphere – Theoretical Introduction.

ICT is undoubtedly one of the major elements in the wave of reforms carried out in many western administration. ICT refers to strategic management and significant changes in the way the public sector works. Pressure for introducing the e-administration is on the increase.







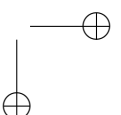
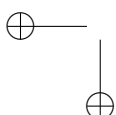
When democracy is evolving and changing, not only ways of managing are changing but also the perception of representation. ICT itself will not affect citizen's attitudes toward community involvement and participation, but can be used to create conditions for a more involving, inclusive and transparent democratic culture.

E-administration may refer to two types of institutional changes. These may be changes in how the internal organization of the public sector works - i.e. the technology can be used to improve collaboration and integration between different levels of government and between offices. The second type is amended to increase the availability of online information about the work of public institutions and the fact that the public sector will try to arrange its activities for the benefit of the people so that the centre of activity is shifted towards self-service (Grönlund and Anderson 2007).

E-democracy can be defined as a deeper and broader insight, by using information technology, in what is happening in the public sector. The main elements of electronic democracy are greater insight into the politics and public administration bodies, as well as facilitating people's participation in public debates, including easier access to information and the debates themselves, which may contribute to the deepening and increasing citizen's influence on policy. In the literature on e-democracy can be seen high expectations in relation to new technologies, the structural consequences of their introduction as well as specific opportunities that technology can give. The Internet allows people to connect in the network and find information in many different sources, and also participate in many different networks. It provides a communication infrastructure, which is characterized by symmetry - we can usually send the same amount of information as we receive. In addition, it can be used remotely from anywhere.

The widespread availability means in practice that everyone who has access to the Internet has the opportunity to participate. Furthermore, the Internet gives the opportunity for interactivity, a better geographical spread, more open administration and greater opportunity for civic participation. These are in any case, the expectations associated with the Internet as a technology. The reality shows that use of these possibilities and opportunities is rather modest. The Internet can provide opportunities for democratic participation, but the technical possibilities themselves do not lead to it.

Participation is one of the most important elements of democracy and is closely associated with a number of processes that link with communication and the access to social decision-making processes. These processes to a greater or lesser extent use ICT technologies and the Internet as an aid, even though they themselves are not dependent on the Internet. These technologies offer the potential for interactivity and can create new forms of democratic dialogue between the residents themselves, remote organizations and representatives of the citizens. In broad terms we can say that the policy covers the activities, which we undertake as citizens to solve problems



concerning the community or group interests. Importance that Habermas attaches to public discourse as a means to achieve consensus or at least the decision taken by the majority, is the cornerstone of democracy.

This view is based on the assumption that no single person has knowledge of all the data, nor can it take into account all the consequences of the given solution or policy. Open process of public debate will lead to better decisions. Habermas's view on democracy, however, is just one of many ideas that we presented in the earlier parts of the report. The importance attributed to digital technology depends on how it defines the concept of democracy. The theories about direct democracy, discursive and competitive relationship between democracy and technology is handled in different ways (Christensen, Aars 2002; Rose 2005; Grönlund and Anderson 2007; Baldersheim, Øgård 2007; Haug 2007).

We can come across the following types of democracy while studying theory (Christensen, Aars 2002; Held 2006; Mutz 2006; Haug 2007):

- direct democracy: goal - the sovereignty of a nation/ the equality; basis of legitimacy - decisions of the majority; role of citizens - decision-making; the mandate of representatives – related; the most important element in the use of ICT – decisions;
- competitive democracy: goal - individual freedom; basis of legitimacy - holding to account; role of citizens – electorate; the mandate of representatives – unbound; the most important element in the use of ICT –information;
- discursive democracy: goal – autonomy; basis of legitimacy - the public debate role of citizens - opinion-forming; the mandate of representatives – interactive; the most important element in the use of ICT – discussion.

The above-mentioned views on democracy have different implications for the use of technology in democracy. The issues on direct democracy on the Internet and the performance of democratic principles are widely discussed by the supporters. Technology is assigned the key role, it is a cornerstone of broader participation and it is said to be an opportunity to move away from the old hierarchy and the indirect representation. Development of technology has given supporters of direct democracy new arguments: the computer creates the possibility of immediate communication, so the views of individual citizens may be quickly and efficiently recorded via the Internet. Such a perspective is very conducive for fast action and is focused on the individual. Politicians have access to the will of the people and the only thing that should be done is to read it. Self-reliant "digital citizen" will replace the traditional institutions of collective representation. Electronic opinion polls, a daily online voting are the main components of tomorrow's democracy (Rose 2002; Kersting, Baldersheim 2004).

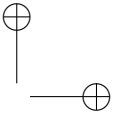
Competitive model of democracy is a bit more defensive. Widespread and frequent participation of citizens in social life is not an end itself. The most important here is the competition among individual elites to win votes. The quality of democracy is reviewed every four years when during the elections the politicians are called to account. In this model of democracy information strategies differ from those of the previous model. Too much openness seems to be a problem - there is a likelihood that politicians will be more interested in promoting their own image than taking responsibility for their actions. It can therefore create conflicts. However, technology itself can be a useful tool, and the Internet can be used to provide information and gain support for the policy elites. Technology can also contribute to improving the working conditions of representatives and thus create favourable conditions for the exercise of political leadership. In addition, technology can be used to develop public services through customer surveys, or surveys of users of these services.

In the theory of communication or discursive democracy, democracy is not conceived as an aggregate of individual preferences. Here, the common denominator is associated with hope for a political discussion which would be a means to reach political agreement on contentious issues. The will of the society here is not understood as something immutable, it is created during a debate in which various arguments are confronted. Here the message is this: we need a moment to "stop" to make room for a good discussion or public debate. From the perspective of communication theory, the main idea is an active communication strategy. The key strategy is to create new space, which enables creation of unrestricted communication. Particularly important for such public sphere is the development of media, including Internet, and the strength of new technology lies precisely in this interactive element. It allows not only the one-way communication, such as (to a large extent, do) traditional media, but thanks to digital technology, people can change from passive recipients into active participants. The interest in e-democracy focused, in many countries, especially in management at the local level. This has many reasons. First, the policy at the local level is more transparent. Second, it is often easier to try out new solutions on "small", local matters. Third, there are already a number of issues, such as those related to spatial planning, where municipalities are obliged to consult with the residents. Such consultations can be carried out i.a. via the Internet.

Research conducted in the Norwegian and Polish communities has shown that municipalities can be contacted via the Internet (Christensen, Aaars 2002; Guzik 2004; Baldersheim, Øgård 2007; Winswold 2007; Biernacka-Ligieza 2009). Vast majority of them can be contacted via e-mail, and most have their own websites, and the content and level of information provided on the municipal website, is diversified. On the pages of some municipalities, vast amounts of information is provided, while others limit themselves to publishing the address or telephone number. At the beginning many municipalities treated their websites as a hobby or fringe activity,

much less important than the ordinary work of the commune. Currently, it is clear that the communication network is becoming one of the most important for many communities and, increasingly, it becomes more professional: more municipalities actively use the Internet, and newly arrived residents are eager to use electronic solutions. However, it still cannot be concluded that ICT itself changed the functioning of communities, both in Poland and Norway. ICT supports more traditional, formal and representative political process. In practice, this means that it is used primarily as an information tool and is still dominated by one-way communication. When municipalities use the Internet, the most important thing for them is probably not political participation of citizens, but the services that the municipality offers. The municipality is focused here on high quality gained by the new technologies - the role of citizens is not so accentuated as "the role of co-owners (Christensen, Aars 2002; Winswold 2007).

Municipalities are able to inform fairly well with residents of democratic processes, but they are doing worse with allowing residence to have an active democratic influence through democratic municipal websites. Attempts to increase civic engagement - through discussions or direct decision-making - are rare and do not function very well. The analysis shows that both Norwegian, and Polish municipalities do not provide information about what happens next with the result of discussions and conversations on the forums. It is worth noting that in the case of Polish municipalities, conducting a public debate is extremely rare and usually occurs when discussed problems lead to serious social consequences - its implementation would be impossible without the approval of the local community. An important reason for this is probably the fact that the forums are in no way related to political decision-making process in communities and that local politicians do not engage in debate. Access to e-mail addresses of local governments, compared with the administration, is also limited. The debate on local political issues has not yet moved exclusively to the Internet or it has not been moving as quickly as it is possible. Researchers still (Christensen, Aars, Rose, Baldersheim, Torpe) argue that local politicians seldom engage in the implementation of Internet solutions in the community and that community networks are presented primarily as a provider of public services. The Internet most often constitutes support for politicians - especially in election campaigns, but still it is not the most important weapon. Politicians still give priority to the press, radio and television. Attempts to combine the benefits of ICT to the traditional media message has not been very successful, especially attempts to introduce an electronic platform for communication. Modalen (Modalen multimedia project) and Molde (D:MO project) stand out as evidence. The project introduced in Vestfold, however, turned out to be the only success. The project used communication through blogs to link politicians to their electorate. Its therefore worth considering whether the use of ICT technology strengthens either the role of government in local politics or politicians themselves?



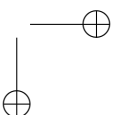
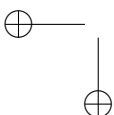
International studies seem to confirm this hypothesis and motivate it by the fact that the administration has a number of electronic tools that enable it to represent the interests of particular groups of people (Snellen 2003; Pratchet 2006). The feature of the Internet is the possibility of bilateral communication, which is interactive. In other words, the Internet is not only a medium of information, but it also offers a space for discussion and debate among people or entities that are physically far apart. Because of that the Internet is becoming a good tool for democratic participation. Hence, there are very high expectations on the consequences for democracy, by the introduction of this medium (Torpe, Nielsen 2004).

### **ICT, local community, local politics and local democracy: case study**

When we look closer at the local governance across Europe we can clearly see that different ways of strengthening citizens' trust in local authorities and the creation of platforms of public dialogue are important factors that shape contemporary democracy. Local communities search for solutions that will help in realization the essential principles of community communication which are public trust and social dialogue. Both of those elements strengthen the sense of responsibility for the region what positively influences the quality of the local governance and all other institutions that create the local public sphere. In the XXIst century, century of the digital communication reign the above needs must be realized by creating a sufficient digital communication platforms.

As the digitalization process has diverse course in different cultures so it is worth to do some comparative study. The author of this paper is trying to analyse how the power of ICT is used by local communities in countries of different economy and democracy level. Is it a big gap between them at this ground? Moreover due to this study we may also rise the idea of implementing some good practice from Norway (highly technologically developed country) into the countries of reborn democracies with rapidly growing technology as Poland.

To answer questions mentioned above it was necessary to do the analysis of "community communication" in both countries. All communes described in the paper have their own websites. Lots of information can be found there, especially in the largest communes surveyed. Pages are frequently updated, and current information are constantly added. A common feature of most of them is that they contain practical messages on both the democratic process in municipalities, as well as information from the council and various committees. Above all, the information relates to specific areas of activity of the municipality. The average Internet user will find there are 'fill in the blanks' forms, and different other forms that they need so they are saved



from a physical trip to the city hall to get a form or other documents needed. The service of Polish communes websites is rather less advanced technologically and still needs some improvements both technical and legislative (e.g. proper rules for using electronic signature; implementation of electronic documents system). In the end of this article, is presented a way of promoting individual municipalities on the Internet (Tables: 1; 2). For this paper there were chosen three communes from each country: Poland - Dzierżonów, Wałbrzych, Jaworzyna Śląska; Norway - Asker, Drammen, Rollag)<sup>1</sup>. We should refer not only to the presentation of the municipality as a political and administrative unit, but also as a institution and organization operating within its area.

In conclusion, municipalities use the Internet primarily as a means of transmitting information from the municipality to the residents (both in Poland and Norway). This is not a communication space between the municipality and residents or between politicians and voters. Where the network is a communication space, it is not municipality that initiates it but local or regional newspapers with its online version (both in Poland and Norway) or commercially owned local information services in case of Poland (e.g. [ww.doba.pl](http://ww.doba.pl); [www.walbrzyszek.pl](http://www.walbrzyszek.pl)) and political parties in case of Norway. This offer is, however, still limited. With regard to the news website, common use of the Internet is something different from using the Internet as a channel of communication between the municipality and residents. All the municipalities covered by the survey have their own websites, most of which are extensive and comprehensive in their provision of detailed information. This applies to all kinds of information, from driving directions to the school, through cultural events, and ending on the forms to be filled in order to get a place in kindergarten. However, still not many communities in Poland can apply for a place in kindergarten through the Internet because they have not yet met both the safety and the technical requirements, including the protection of personal data. Security of the web based communication is still a challenge with Polish municipalities but it has been improving day by day. Municipalities that do not yet offer such a possibility are currently working on it, thus in the near future it is expected that – according to the plan of information society development - sending applications electronically should be possible soon in most of Polish municipalities (Strategia rozwoju społeczeństwa informacyjnego do roku 2013, [The Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in Poland until 2013], MSWiA, 2008).

Almost all municipalities include on their websites information about the services they offer. The more comprehensive websites (e.g. Drammen, Wałbrzych) are complex with lots of information. You can find there everything: from the opening hours of the various public institutions such as the swimming pool and library, through in-

<sup>1</sup>Factors taken into consideration while choosing the municipality were: commune size (more than 60.000 citizens; between 20.000 and 60.000; less than 20.000); type of commune (urban; semi-urban; rural); institutional role (the main city of the region).

formation on the operation of kindergartens, the school common room, tax information, the superintendent, planning-town office, or the latest news from the community. Both on the Polish and Norwegian website are reminders of cultural events, meetings with artists and concerts. Residents can also read about the deadlines for applications such as for a place in kindergarten. There is also information about training of the local sports club and the opening hours of the gyms in the municipality.

Information is quite regularly updated (especially in developed communes) and the residents who frequently visit websites of municipalities can keep-up with information about public services. They can also easily figure out where to look for more detailed information. Municipal websites also contain links to other sites including institutions and public office sites where you can ask questions on public services.

Many municipalities also publish the results carried out by public opinion surveys of users of public services (e.g. Asker commune posted the results of several years of research on kindergarten, Dzierżoniów communes regularly post results of each years' customer satisfaction survey).

Commune websites relate to political issues in two ways: they present what is happening on the board of the municipality, but party politics is left to political parties. The list of issues raised at meetings of the council and the municipal executive board and other committees is presented in electronic services, in order to easily find out what issues local government are currently engaged in. Moreover many Norwegian municipalities inform, in detail about current political issues. If it comes to the local politics being visible on the Web Norwegian municipalities websites (e.g. Asker and Drammen) can be distinct from what one comes across in Polish municipalities. However, municipalities in both countries are present in the Internet primarily as a provider of public services. The political aspect is not as omitted though, it is not readily available in many communes as the information is not posted on the main sites, therefore, to find information about the activities of municipalities, as political organizations, or information about municipal policies need to either go to the microsite, or go directly to these sites by browser, or commercial information services.

The information services of most municipalities in Norway provide a list of politicians, with their phone numbers and e-mail addresses, but you cannot always find the information represented by the political parties. In the case of Polish municipalities the situation is not so obvious. Most politicians are only mentioned as members of the municipal executive board; getting a mentioning on this list is sometimes difficult. The website of the Norwegian municipalities often have links to local political parties. On the Polish reality scene, this is rather seldom seen. None of the Polish municipalities analyzed in this paper posted links to the local political parties websites.

Convergent for both Polish and Norwegian services is the provision of information about what is going on at the meetings of the council, the municipal executive

board and committees, although not in all municipalities is information given in the same degree of detail. There is information about the meetings and agendas of different kinds, and about decisions taken that can also be quickly learnt and accessed from the network. In this respect, small municipalities do not differ at all from the big ones: website users are informed in the same way about the resolutions of the municipality / city by the small communes of Rollag or Jaworzyna Śląska and the big communes as Drammen or Walbrzych. The difference is, however, in the amount of information. In addition, large municipalities seem to have more professional websites. Some sites include links to the source of information about provincial council and the local elections.

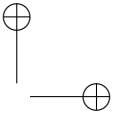
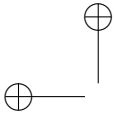
In Norway websites of political parties are much more diverse than the websites of municipalities and these differences do not need to necessarily be related to the size of the party. It is rather the possession of knowledge of web design, which is necessary to design and update web page. In all municipalities one or more political parties has its own website, and most of the material posted on this site is plain information. This may be the presentation of major candidates and the party board, the program or its opinions on current, local political problems. Some of the parties present implemented works, and those over which they want to work in the future.

Both in Poland and Norway at the most local party websites, you can find information about people to contact and opportunities to establish it with representatives of the parties (here, mostly appears contact to a local party branch chairman.) But we cannot say that this information is open space for dialogue especially in case of Poland. You can make contact - by phone or via e-mail - with the President or other members of the party. Whether this will be a two way contact - between a voter and a member of the party or between the citizen and the politician - or whether it contributes to public debate on the Internet, depends on how parties treat such notifications.

In Poland, very few local parties create opportunities for active participation in political dialogue at the local level through the network for the residents. In Norway, a local political debate in the network is more visible, but it still does not constitute predominant dialogue space for the local public sphere. Few examples of separate local discussion forums (both in the Polish and Norwegian municipalities) can be indicated, where in the local political problems are discussed and Internet users take up important matters. It also seems that these forums that exist, are not used to extensively. Neither do the larger nor smaller political parties offer discussion groups or other opportunities that expand the debate on the network. In some municipalities it is the smallest local party or municipal association which offers such function (e.g. OBS). Probably, it can be explained by the fact that some parties have members who are interested in technical issues and perceive the Internet as a place for political debate, while the other parties do not have such members.

On the sites of all Norwegian municipalities surveyed we can find links of groups





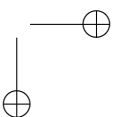
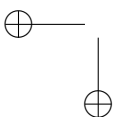
and associations working in the area. This makes it possible to orient in the activities of local NGOs. In varying degrees, information about offers of different organizations can be found. Some of these associations have complex websites, others do not have websites at all and are only mentioned in the municipal service. Lists like these are written by the same pattern as the traditional presentation of organizations in the written information issued by local governments such as brochures describing what is happening in the district. This includes both municipality and NGOs' offers. In Poland insertion of information devoted to activities of non-governmental organizations on community websites has improved, but of course it is not such a common occurrence as is the case with Norway, which certainly adversely affects the development of an adequate level of public debate, and thus somewhat weakens the emerging local democracy in Poland.

## Digital Participation

Electronic services of municipalities provide residents with detailed and updated information, and thanks to the WWW sites people who have the access to the Internet can get the information they need without going to the town hall. Municipalities included in the study put more emphasis on the aspect of an information network; therefore, their websites offer people comprehensive and useful information. It is not confined to public services or cultural events in the municipality. On the web of Norwegian municipalities there are also references to the municipal council resolutions undertaken or city council. Some of the municipalities, before the meeting, publish a list of matters the given institution will work on (e.g., Asker).

At the beginning of this century small municipalities in Norway were subjected to criticism. They were criticized for unprofessionalism and that they do not even deserve to be called web pages. This criticism even then was not justified. The smallest municipalities did not and still do not differ from the largest in terms of informing the public about services or about the meetings of the municipal council. Differences are primarily placed on the amount of information rather than on their quality, shape, or manner of communication. Large municipalities have more information to share, as such Asker municipality website is seen to have more content than the Rollag municipality site.

The situation is somehow different in Poland, where very often the shape, form and quality of the website design is being determined the commune budget, which, unfortunately, in the case of small municipalities is sometimes quite limited. It must be admitted that the quality of web pages in Polish municipalities in 2002, left much to be desired (especially when it comes to small municipalities). The passing decade definitely changed the image of the Polish e-community and, just as in Norway, the difference between large and small municipality in the network primarily refers to



the quantity rather than quality of the information published on the website of the municipality. A common feature of the analyzed communities is primarily the fact that the Internet is used as a information channel rather than as a channel of participation. If people are to participate in political discourse, information is very important, because in contrast to public opinion polls and plebiscites, and even consultation, participation requires access to information in order to form an opinion on the subject of discussion. Active participation also requires something more: to focus on the role of the citizen. If residents have been involved in the process of policy formation, it is important to know their rights. What information do the authorities, particularly the local governments, want from the residents? To what extent can residents expect their views to be listened to and used? When can they expect feedback? Morrison and Newman (2001) suggest that the rapprochement between the residents and politicians, relies on something other than connecting the consumer with commercial interests. Strengthening the role of the citizen is not just that residents are listened to, but also to emphasize the responsibilities and liabilities associated with being a citizen of a democratic society. But in order for residents to take part in political debate as the person informing the politicians, they must be well informed themselves. Active participation in the political debate requires a balanced, high-quality information so that participants would not only have contact with their own views but perhaps with the views of those who disagree with them. Internet provides a sketchy knowledge, and often people receive information from a limited number of sources which, in the worst case, only worsen the already existing prejudices.

The role of the municipality websites as information disseminators is very important, because in this way people receive knowledge on political matters and have a base to form an opinion on the given issue. Such a knowledge base is necessary for inhabitants to become informed citizens, capable to fully participate in the political discussion. The work that is done by the communes on their websites, consisting of informing the political agenda, activities and issues over which local government operates, as well as indicating the reasons for decisions taken, is therefore very important. The local parties also have their roles to be done. In this field the results were worse than in all discussed municipalities especially in case of Poland where local politicians are visible on the web only before the election and just after it. Websites of local parties or local branches of national parties in Poland are not very frequently updated and there are more likened to posters of the party than debate forums.

Information is an important basis for active participation in the political life of the commune. The Internet which is a different way than the traditional political channels, can give residents the opportunity of such participation. Yet, it is still a lot to be done in this field in municipalities both in Poland and Norway. The possibilities of inviting residents to the political debate in the municipality such as in newsgroups or via the feedback and reactions to the proposals of politicians are not often used

in Norway and in Poland. It seems to be much better with Norwegian municipalities where we can meet some positive examples of public dialogue being followed on the Net (e.g. Asker commune). In Poland it is a rare practice to create the active discussion platform at the local community level. Existing websites are more like passive description of the municipality, local policy, local politicians etc. It is probably not the result of deliberately chosen strategy by the municipality and this could be explained by the fact that the Internet's potential is still not fully exploited by the municipalities. It seems that there is still some time before it will be perceived also as a forum for discussion, in which residents can participate and which will be more accessible than traditional forms of participation, such as open meetings, party, etc.

Both in Poland and Norway the biggest communes have usually the most complex websites. You can find there a detailed presentation of the local administration, municipal services and the latest information useful to residents. This does not mean that smaller municipalities do not have good websites, similar in content to larger ones. It is clear however that the biggest municipalities have in their services the largest amount of information. They just have more to offer: more schools, kindergartens, more cultural events, which they can inform about and more user surveys that can be placed on the Internet. The need for information is thus the largest in the largest municipalities, and they probably just have the most to gain from having a good website.

Christensen, Aars (2002), Guzik (2005), Winswold (2007), Biernacka-Ligęza (2009) in their studies of Norwegian and Polish municipalities in the network have shown that when it comes to the differences between communes in terms of Internet presence and extent of local democracy, a significant role is played by the number of inhabitants. It does not change the fact that many small municipalities have made very positive results in the study, although it is clear that the size of the municipality is important to decide whether it will come into existence in the network or not, and if so - what will be the quality of this presence. In short, small municipalities do not have a sufficient range of services to investment in the viability of electronic technology. Thus, they believe that if the e-administration is soon to replace traditional one the extensive cooperation between municipalities is needed. It allows for a smooth transition to an electronic management system in the municipality.

For residents of communities being analysed in this paper (both Polish and Norwegian) the Internet at the beginning of this century was not a very important source of information about local issues. Only few people read the mayors and other politicians statements that appear in the network (about 7% of Norwegians and less than 1% of Poles). Only 3% of the population of Norway was actively involved in Internet political debates and less than 1% in Poland<sup>2</sup>.

Today the situation is slightly different, especially when it comes to the Internet

<sup>2</sup>NIBR 2004; Author's own research 2004.

as a source of information, which for many residents of Polish communities is precisely the most important place where they seek information relevant to them about the region (approx. 39%). However, they do not seek such information at the municipal sites but rather use the commercial information services such as [www.doba.pl](http://www.doba.pl); [www.walbrzyszek.pl](http://www.walbrzyszek.pl). In Norway, the local newspaper still remains the main source of information about the municipality (approx. 57%). Of course, paper publications are more often accompanied by electronic editions. Today, almost every local title has its own page on the Internet.

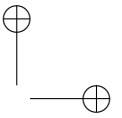
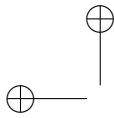
Taking into account the opportunity to participate in political discussions on the Internet, it may not be surprising, since the possibilities of discussing politics in the network are few, they are limited and in addition very often linked to specific political parties. Since few residents are members of political parties, we cannot expect that participation in the existing newsgroups will be high.

However, it might have been expected that the number of people who have seen or read posted statements of mayors or other local politicians on the web, would be much greater. Such statements can be found not only on the municipal website and on the websites of parties, but also, and more often than in the electronic version, in newspapers. Despite this, less than 25% of the population of Norway and 3% of inhabitants of Poland have become familiarized with these statements through the Internet.

It is worth to indicate that both in Poland and Norway the Internet is very important source of information about the region its culture, tourist attraction, economy but most respondents (55% of Norwegians and 76% of Poles)<sup>3</sup> stated that the Internet is still not an important source of information about local politics. Taking into account that over 61% Norwegians and 34% found that the local newspaper is an important source of information, it can be concluded that the Internet as a source of information about local politics and as an arena to exchange views on political issues, is still in its early stages of development.

Thus, the results show that the Internet, scarcely has been used by politicians as a possible source of political information or communication. Today its popularity has increased considerably. However, it seems to be more visible on the national level, where very often the presence of politics in the network determines its success. In the case of policy at local level, where politicians are no longer anonymous and known by the voters only from the media, network is no longer an essential element of communication with the voter. This is confirmed by the analysis, which shows that the Internet is not regarded as an important source of information on local politics in any of the municipalities, and even though you can point out the differences between the countries and areas, they are not so big. Participation in online political debate is also not popular. Such "chat rooms/discussion forums" are created by

<sup>3</sup>SSB 2009; Authors own research 2009.



newspapers, political parties or commercial information portals and are not part of municipal information services. This is because municipalities tend to rely on information concerning the resolutions of the political or administrative regulations, and creating space for political debate is left for political parties or other entities.

## Summary

Internet was opened to ordinary people at the end of last century. Today, browsing the Web and reading e-mails is an integral part of everyday's life, half of households in Poland (55%)<sup>4</sup> and almost all of Norway (95%) have access to the Internet. Advances in ICT are very fast and they are often used in companies, households and the public sector. It has been implemented almost in all municipalities both in Poland and Norway.

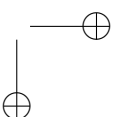
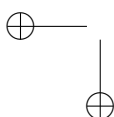
Internet proved to be for majority of Polish and Norwegian municipalities mainly a tool for conveying information and providing services on the appropriate level, very rarely used as a platform for debate. In Norway, the most important role in building local democracy and local identity continues to play a local newspaper (in printed and electronic version), where readers can find both information and also have the opportunity to participate in the debate. In Poland, however, local news sites are very popular (often commercial initiative, or additional activity of local publishers/broadcasters) and usually win with the press. Norwegian local politicians are much more "visible" on the Internet, than Polish, and it is much easier to find information about local political parties, which additionally provide up-to-date information to their constituency. Both Poles and Norwegians are not looking for information about local politicians/politics on the Internet. What is different, it is the motivation for this behaviour - Norwegians simply find those information in local newspapers, and Poles show little interest in this area.

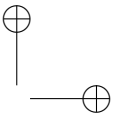
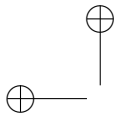
The strengthen of the two sided communication for building up the local debate seems to be an important issue both for Polish and Norwegian municipalities especially if the aforementioned 'strong dimension of' democracy is to be further strengthened, consensus and cooperation need to be emphasized. The basis for the legitimacy is public debate, and the mandates of elected representatives are interactive or granted in consultation with those who are represented. The main role of the population is its opinion-forming ability and therefore, except information and services, the most important field of contribution in the usage of IT should be debate.

"Internet challenges" for municipalities will not concern the information, although in this field there is probably still something to do. Small and large communities can better cooperate with each other in solving technological problems than in isolation.

---

<sup>4</sup>Internetworldstats 2010.

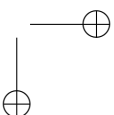
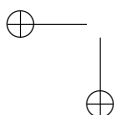




The biggest challenge will be to use the Internet to engage citizens in discussion about the future of the municipality - in short - to strengthen political commitment and participation. We must therefore focus not on the information, as before, but on including consultation and, above all, active participation of residents. This requires different ways of working and a much more involvement, not only from the municipal administration, but also from politicians. Technology that allows residents to participate in political debate through the Internet or expressing their opinion, e.g. on the planned construction work, is available today. It includes tools such as "chat rooms/discussion forums", where residents and politicians may participate in joint discussions, and simulation tools that can be used to show the consequences of given decisions, e.g. on expansion of the municipality, the budget or space planning.

Technology offers various possibilities and, although not all are yet fully developed, many tools can be very useful. This does not mean that we should ignore the disadvantages of new technology, or forget about the traditional forms of participation. However, it is worth noting that use of technology could contribute to the strengthening of political participation at local level. In this process it is important to take into account both the advantages and disadvantages (e.g. on the one hand, chat is not only good for teenagers, but on the other, this form of discussion can be rather chaotic.).

We should also look at information in terms of authenticity, credibility and confidence, which requires its frequent updating. The uncertainty which may create anonymity in the network also in political discussions. Such problems arise and the challenge is to find solutions for them, among others through various forms of registration, which also allow for anonymity in the debate, since this can contribute to a greater sense of security. We still lack real opportunities to participate in political discussions on the Internet and the municipality should develop its offer. Such possibilities and not the Internet itself, have a chance to actively engage residents in making sense of their own political process.



.	Commune	Parties	Other	Media <sup>5</sup>
<b>Asker</b>	Own web page with lots of information, opinion surveys of users, annual reports, list of all the politicians (names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses). Ability to search for information and download documents send e-mail to the mayor.	All political parties have websites with lots of information and an indication how to contact with politicians.	Ability to establish contact with various groups and associations (through the municipality's website.)	Newspaper: <i>Asker og Bærum Budstikke</i> TV <i>Buskerud</i> Radio <i>The Beat Asker og Bærum</i>
<b>Drammen</b>	Own website, updated several times a week. Information about the municipality and links to other important sites. Forms, annual report, references to various institutions, organizations and many others. Ability to search for information and download documents send e-mail to the mayor.	Political parties have their own web pages, links to them are on the website of the municipality.	Links to selected municipal orchestras, cinemas, theatres, churches, museums, etc.	<i>Drammen Mediehus</i> (radio, TV, newspaper): <i>Drammens Tidende</i> . Other media: Radio (Metro; Filadelfia; Radio 7, TV <i>Buskerud</i>
<b>Rollag</b>	Own website - frequently updated. Information about the community, cultural life and education. Special note to residents from outside the municipality who in its have cottages. Ability to search for information and download documents send e-mail to the mayor.	Some of local parties have their own websites but some use websites of the provincial branch of the party e.g.: Ap – does not have its own site, but information about the party may be found on the provincial site of the party. Sp – has its own website dedicated to local elections; you can find there party program and news. There is a possibility to establish contact with politicians.	Links to groups and associations active in the community and calendar of events for the region. Also, links to sports clubs, parish councils, sport school, and many others	Newspaper: <i>Laagendals-posten</i> . There is no local radio or TV information from the commune are presented in local TV and radio stations operated from Drammen.

**Tabela 1:** Promoting individual municipalities on the Internet. Source: SSB; NIBR; Authors own research

.	Commune	Parties	Other	Media <sup>6</sup>
<b>Wałbrzych</b>	Own website. Municipal information and presentation of the various public services. Information about the repertoire of cinemas, activities for children. Links to sites describing the local cultural offer: music groups (internet service culture) and many others. Ability to: search for information, download documents, send e-mail to the mayor.	Local branches of national parties PO, SLD, PiS do not have their own websites. Programs and information about local politicians are placed on the website of provincial party branch and it is rather difficult to find them or they are limited. Local municipal association <i>Wałbrzyska Wspólnota Samorządowa</i> have their own websites where you can find list of party initiatives. The websites are not frequently updated and are not linked to the municipality website.	The municipality website links to many other sites - both non-governmental organizations, cultural institutions, research organizations, EU funds, public institutions, NGOs, associations and sites devoted to economy and tourism. Commercial information services e.g. <a href="http://www.naszwalbrzych.pl">www.naszwalbrzych.pl</a> ; <a href="http://www.walbrzyszek.com">www.walbrzyszek.com</a> - they are popular source of information and a debate forum.	Newspapers: <i>Tygodnik Wałbrzyski</i> , <i>Nowe Wiadomości Wałbrzyskie</i> TV: <i>TV Włbrzych</i> Radio: There is no proper local radio stations in Wałbrzych. There are regional or national stations which emit local information e.g. <i>Radio Wrocław</i> ; <i>Radio Złote Przeboje</i>
<b>Dzierżoniów</b>	Own website, updated several times a week. Information about the municipality and links to other important sites. Forms, annual report, references to various institutions, organizations and many others. Information about commune, tourist attraction, culture and sport activities. Ability to: search for information, download documents, send e-mail to the mayor.	Local branches of national parties PO, SLD, PiS do not have their websites. Only local parties or municipal associations have their own web pages but there are very rarely updated (e.g. OBS). The activity of the local politicians is seen on the party webpage just before and short after the election time. There is no links to them on the website of the municipality.	Links to selected municipal institutions (e.g. non-governmental societies). On the municipal website are links to sites describing the local cultural offers: music groups (internet service culture), the local cultural centre and many others. Commercial information services e.g. <a href="http://www.doba.pl">www.doba.pl</a> - they are very popular source of information and a debate forum.	Newspapers: <i>Tygodnik Dzierżoniowski</i> <i>Goniec Dzierżoniowski</i> - bulletin issued weekly by the municipality. TV <i>Sudecka</i> Radio <i>Sudety</i>
<b>Jaworzyna Śląska</b>	Own website updated several times a week. Information about the municipality and links to other useful sites. Ability to download documents.	Local branches of national parties PO, SLD, PiS do not have their websites. Local parties or municipal associations have no websites and are not linked the municipality website.	On the website of the municipality are links to many other websites and portals - both public institutions and NGOs, associations and sites devoted to economic and cultural life.	There is no local newspaper. Information from the commune is published in <i>Gazeta Świdnicka</i> (the paper is devoted to the whole county) <i>Rozmaitości Jaworzyńskie</i> bulletin issued monthly by the municipality. There is no local TV or radio station.

Tabela 2: Promoting individual municipalities on the Internet: Source: Authors own research



## References

- BALDERSHEIM, H., WOLLNANN H. (eds.) (2006), *The comparative study of local government. Overview and synthesis*, Opladen, Barabara Budrich Publisher
- BALDERSHEIM, H., ØGÅRD, M. (2007), Innovation in e-government: Analysis of municipal web pages in the Nordic countries, *Information Polity* 12(4), pp. 1-13
- BIERNACKA-LIGIEZA, I. (2010), *Local communication matters? - local information services in the creation of the civic society – the case of Poland*, paper presented at the IAMCR Conference: Communication and Citizenship: Rethinking Crisis and Change, Braga, July 2010
- BORINS, K. KERNAGHAN, D. BROWN, N. BONTIS, F. THOMPSON (eds.) (2007), *Digital State at the Leading Edge*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- CASTELLS, M. (2000), *End of Millennium*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- CASTELLS, M. (2000), *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- CASTELLS, M. (2001), *The Internet Galaxy. Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- CASTELLS, M. (ed.) (2004), *The Network Society. A Cross-cultural perspective*. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited
- CHRISTENSEN, D.A., AARS, J. (2002), *Teknologi og demokrati. Med norske kommunerpa nett*, Notat 29-2002, Bergen, Rokkansenteret
- DOKTOROWICZ, K. (2002), *Koncepcja społeczeństwa informacyjnego w polityce Unii Europejskiej*, (In:): Haber L. (eds.) *Polskie doświadczenia w kształtowaniu społeczeństwa informacyjnego. Dylematy cywilizacyjno-kulturowe*, AGH, Kraków
- FERLIE, L. LYNN, POLLITT C. (eds.) (2005), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Management*. Oxford, Oxford University Press
- GEŚLICKI R. (2003), *Urząd poinformowan*, Grupa Honesta, Warszawa
- GOLIŃSKI, M. (2003), *Polska jako społeczeństwo informacyjne -ocena infrastruktury technicznej*, (In:): *Rozwój społeczeństwa informacyjnego - teoria i praktyka*, AGH, Kraków

- GRÖNLUND, Å., ANDERSSON, A. (2007), E-government research 2003-2006: Improvements and issues, (in:) NORRIS, D. (eds.) *Current Issues and Trends in E-Government Research*, Hershey, Idea Group, pp 247-288
- GURSTEIN, M. (ed.) (2000), *Community informatics: Enabling communities with information and communication technologies*, London: Idea Group Publishing
- GUZIK, R. (2004), Polskie miasta i gminy wiejskie w Internecie – geografia społeczeństwa informacyjnego, (in:) SŁODCZYK J. (eds.), *Rozwój miast i zarządzanie gospodarką miejską. Miasta w okresie przemian*, Opole
- HABERMAS, J. (1981), *The Theory of Communicative Action*, London, Bacon Press
- HAUG, A.V. (2007), Local Democracy Online: Driven by Crisis, Legitimacy, Resources, or Communication Gaps? *Journal of Information Technology And Politics*, vol. 4, nr. 2
- HEEKS, R. (2006), *Implementing and Managing eGovernment*. London, Sage
- HELD D. (2006), *Models of democracy*, Polity.
- HOFF, J., HORROCKS I., TOPS P. (2000), *Democratic Governance and New Technology. Technologically Mediated innovations in Political Practice in Western Europe*. London, Rutledge
- JONSCHER, Ch. (2001), *Życie okablowane. Kim jesteśmy w epoce przekazu cyfrowego?*, Muza SA, Warszawa
- KERSTING, N., H. BALDERSHEIM (eds.) (2004), *Electronic Voting and Democracy: A Comparative Analysis*. London, Palgrave
- ŁUSZCZUK, M., PAWŁOWSKA, A. (2000), *Stan zaawansowania społeczeństwa informacyjnego w Polsce*, Polska Fundacja Spraw Międzynarodowych, Sprawy Międzynarodowe nr 2(LIII), Warszawa
- MAJTA M. (2005), *Rola informacji w kształtowaniu nowych społeczeństw*, EBIB, Wrocław
- MATTELART A. (2004), *Spółeczeństwo informacji*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków
- MORRISON, J., NEWMAN, D. (2001), Consultation and Participation in New Labour's Britain and Beyond, (in:) *International Review of Law*, Vol. 15, No 2, pp. 171-194

- MUTZ D. C. (2006), *Hearing the other side: deliberative versus participatory democracy*, Cambridge University Press.
- NORRIS, P. (2001), *Digital Divide. Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- ORLIKOWSKI, W. (2000), Using Technology and Constituting Structures: A Practical Lens for Studying Technology in Organisations, *Organizational Science*, vol. 11 (4), pp. 404 - 428
- PRATCHETT, L., WINGFIELD M., POLAT R. K. (2006), Local Democracy Online: An Analysis of Local Government Web Sites in England and Wales, (in:) *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*, 2 (3), 75-92
- PROVAN, K. G., KENIS P. (2007), Modes of Network Governance: Structure, Management, and Effectiveness, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. Vol. 18, 229-252
- ROGERS, E.M. (2003), *Diffusion of innovations*, New York, Free Press
- ROSE, L.E. (2002), Municipal size and local non electoral participation: findings from Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway, *Government and Policy*, vol. 20, 829-851
- ROSE, L.E. (2004), Local Government and Politics. I Heidar, K. (ed.), *Nordic Politics. Comparative Perspectives*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget
- SAGLIE, J., BJRKLOUND T. (eds.) (2005): *Lokalvalg og lokalt folkestyre*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag
- SCOTT, J. K. (2006), 'E' the people: Do U.S. municipal government Web sites support public involvement? *Public Administrative Review*, 66(3), 341-353
- SAMUELSEN, R. (2001), Det interaktive demokrati: IKT-støttet samhandling i og med det offentlige styringsverket i lys av demokratiteoretiske perspektiver, IMEDIA – Norsk Regnesentral, Oslo
- SKOGERBØ, E., WINSWOLD, M. (2008), Nettet som debattarena, (in:) E. Skogebø, G. Enli (eds.) *Digitale Dilemmaer. Nye medieformer, nye utfordringer*, Oslo, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS.
- SNELLEN I. (2003), E-knowledge Management in Public Administration: the An Agenda for the future, (in:) *Knowledge Management in Electronic Government Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, vol. 2645/2003

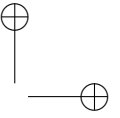
- SNIDER, J. H. (1994), Democracy on-line: Tomorrow's electronic electorate, *The Futurist*, September / October, 15-19
- TOFFLER, A. (1981), *The Third Wave*, New York, Morrow
- TORPE, L., NIELSEN J. (2004), Digital Communication between Local Authorities and Citizen in Denmark, *Local Government Studies*, vol. 30 (2), pp. 230-244
- WEBSTER, F. (2002), *Theories of the Information Society*. New York, Rutledge.
- WILHELM, A.(2000), *Democracy in the Digital Age*. Rutledge, New York
- WINSVOLD, M. (2007), Municipal websites in the local public debate: Supplying facts or setting agenda?, (in:) *Nordicom Review* 2/2007
- ZASĘPA, T., CHMURA, R. (red.) (2003), *Internet i nowe technologie - ku społeczeństwu przyszłości*, Edycja Świętego Pawła, Częstochowa

## Sources

**I. AUTHOR'S SURVEY - POLAND 2002-2010; NORWAY 2008-2010**  
(interviews and questionnaires)

## Reports

*Administracja publiczna w sieci 2002 - czy rzeczywiście bliżej obywatela*, Internet Obywatelski, Warszawa 2002; *Cele i kierunki rozwoju społeczeństwa informacyjnego w Polsce*, KBN, Warszawa 2000; Cellary, W. (ed.) (2002), *Polska w drodze do globalnego społeczeństwa informacyjnego. Raport o rozwoju społecznym*, Warszawa; *eEuropa - Społeczeństwo informacyjne dla wszystkich* Monitor Integracji Europejskiej nr 35, UKiE, Warszawa 2000; *Cele i kierunki rozwoju społeczeństwa informacyjnego w Polsce*, KBN, Warszawa 2000; *Strategia rozwoju społeczeństwa informacyjnego*, MSWiA, 2008; *Rozwój regionalny w Polsce – raport*, Ministerstwo Rozwoju Regionalnego, 2009; *OECD e-Government Studies - Norway* 2005; St. meld. nr. 17 (2006-2007): *Eit informasjonssamfunn for alle*, Fornyings- og administrasjonsdepartement, Oslo; Seggaard S., Ødegård G. (eds.) (2010), *Møte mellom moderne teknologi og lokaldemokrati. Utredning og evaluering av seks e-demokratiprojekter i norske kommuner*, ISF, Oslo; Otterbeek S.R., Rose L., Saglie J. (eds.) (2010), *Lokalvalgsundersøkelsene 1995-2007*, ISF, Oslo; Samuelsen, R. (2001), *Det interaktive demokrati: IKT-støttet*



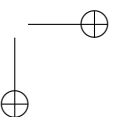
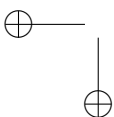
*samhandling i og med det offentlige styringsverket i lys av demokratiteoretiske perspektiver*, IMEDIA – Norsk Regnesentral, Oslo.

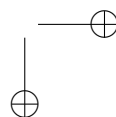
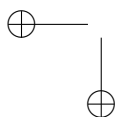
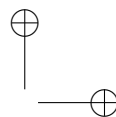
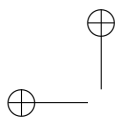
## Statistics

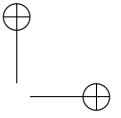
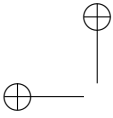
2002-2010 reports of: Central Statistics Office (GUS); Statistics Norway (SSB); Eurostat; Internetworldstats; NIBR; SMG/KRC; PBI; Gemius; Chosen municipalities

## About the author

**Ilona Biernacka-Ligieza** is a doctor of humanities and she works as the Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Studies, University of Opole. From September 2008 she has been the research fellow at the Institute of Media and Communication, University of Oslo. Her research interests include: local media; mass communication; new media; cross-cultural communication; journalism studies; local democracy; globalization; glocalization; media and politics; media and identity.







## Expanding the mass media role for the functioning of the political public sphere.

Rousiley C. M. Maia

The objective of this article is to investigate ways of comprehending the notion of public sphere and its interfaces with mass communication in Jürgen Habermas' s more mature writings such as *Between Facts and Norms* [1992] and the essays "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere" (1992) and "Political Communication in Media Society" (2006, 2009a). Most scholars, particularly in sociological and political fields, focus on *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* for a critical examination of the interfaces between the mass media and the constitution of the public opinion, and of processes of collective decision-making and generation of legitimacy. My aim in this article is to show fundamental changes in the habermasian theory, which brought about new approaches to the functions that mass communication exerts on the discursive processes of legitimation in democratic societies.

If initially Habermas believes that mass media is prejudicial to the good performance of democratic practices, in his more mature works he believes in an ambivalent potential of the media that can both obstruct and support a vigorous public sphere. I seek to show that the author understands mass communication phenomena in an ever more complex way, moving to a plea for empirical research. In spite of being the target of a number of criticisms and leaving unanswered important issues, Habermas' approach offers relevant concepts and insights into understanding the media, especially journalism, as a forum of civic debate<sup>1</sup>, online deliberation<sup>2</sup> and their various interfaces with the deliberative system<sup>3</sup>.

### Antecedents

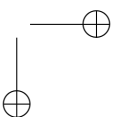
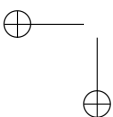
Habermas' formulations in *Structural Transformation*, although remaining extremely influential, have been criticized from various areas and traditions of thought. A set of scholars contests Habermas' stylized historical projection that neglects cultural

---

<sup>1</sup> See Calhoun, 1992; Correia, 1998; Dahlgren, 1995; Dahlgren & Sparks, 1993; Hallin, 1993; Norris, 2000; Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002; Busch, 2007; Gomes & Maia, 2008; Peters, Wessler, Ecker-Ehrhardt, Dereje, & Sindram, 2007a; Peters, Schultz, & Wimmel, 2007)

<sup>2</sup> See Bohman, 2007; Dahlberg, 2001, 2002, 2007; Dahlgren, 2005, 2009; Janssen & Kies, 2005; Hauser, 2007; Maia, Gomes, Marques, 2011; Papacharissi, 2002

<sup>3</sup> See; Bennett, Pickard, Iozzi, Scchoeder, & Caswell, 2004; Gastil, 2008; Gomes & Maia, 2008; Maia, 2008; forthcoming; Page, 1996; Wessler e Schultz, 2007; Wessler, 2008)



and national variants and the different trajectories in the construction of the State and public life (Calhoun, 1992; Eley, 1992; Schudson, 1992). Critics in the Marxist tradition insist that the public sphere ended up fulfilling the political function of publicly defending the private nature of society (Negt & Kluge, 1993; Aronowitz, 1993). They contend that Habermas' account focuses on the bourgeois public sphere and excludes the proletariat and the feminists, which also organized themselves in their own setting of meetings and discussion, and were fundamental in transforming the agenda of political debates and the organization of public life in the nineteenth century. Another group of scholars focuses on participation and contests the elitist nature of Habermas' approach which excludes women and minority groups (Fraser, 1992; Ansen & Brouwer, 2001). They indicate that he underestimates the democratizing function of the expansion of education and suffrage; he neglects the important role of social movements and the gains produced by those who struggled for greater social inclusion and for the removal of obstacles and differences defined in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. Communication scholars show that Habermas develops a reductionist vision of the media and neglects their potential, including alternative media, to generate critical reflection and facilitate democratic participation of citizens (Correia, 1998; Stevenson, 2002; Downing, 2002; Hallin, 1993; Dahlgren & Sparks, 1993). Other more radical critics regard the enlightened public sphere as an unrealistic ideal – unattainable in modern society (Villa, 2002; Connolly, 1991).

Habermas reformulates his theoretical framework in later works, in order to show that the normative potential for the public sphere should not be seen as limited to a single period. He is sensitive to many of these criticisms and seeks to respond to some of them. In *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas abandons the strategy of a specific historical account, but continues his project to seek an approach of the intersubjective communicative process (and of its emancipatory potential), rather than a philosophy or politics based on the subject. In this work, Habermas reopens the path to consider social integration based on communication, from progressively theoretical and abstract concepts linked to the philosophy of language and moral philosophy. Although he does not investigate the problem of the public sphere, Habermas seeks to associate the premises of rational communication with a new social theory framework. Distinguishing between system and the *lifeworld*, Habermas proposes that society is integrated by both systemic – non-linguistic and impersonal coordination means, such as money in markets and bureaucratic codes in the administrative apparatus, through functional feedback that do not depend on awareness and the calculation of the individual – and communicative mechanisms – coordination means which reproduce themselves through communicative action founded on values, norms and processes of understanding in the *lifeworld*. Therefore, Habermas idealizes interpersonal relations of the *lifeworld* as a counterpoint to the systemic integration with its dehumanizing and reifying characteristics. This gives him elements to revitalize the





#### Expanding the mass media role for the functioning of the political public sphere. 145

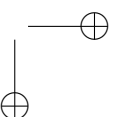
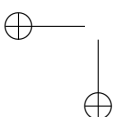
Kantian ideals and, in a broader sense, the democratic ideals for the communicative solution of problems, in a world which is still subject to the domination of capitalism and bureaucratic power.

The transformation of discourse theory, with its foundations in the philosophy of language and the discourse ethics, into a democratic theory occurred in *Between Facts and Norms*, especially in discussions about the law system and constitutionalism. Habermas returns to the issue of revitalizing the public sphere and the possibility of developing and recognizing a truly authentic general interest to which public opinion could refer. In order to face the issue of democratic legitimacy and the constitution of a general interest, under conditions of a complex and ethically pluralist society, Habermas takes several important steps, which cannot be laid out here. It is relevant to highlight that the author put the public sphere back into his theorizing and attempts to clarify the infrastructure of communicative power that may act to reshape both the social relation and their hierarchies and the decision-making in formal political institutions and their operations of power. Habermasian theory changes less in its foundations than in the complexity in which the author deals with some of its aspects.

### **Multiple types, modes and levels of argumentative exchange in *Between Facts and Norms***

Habermas understands that public deliberation cannot be based on a substantive criterion or value, but on a discursive procedure by which it is possible to impartially base action norms and collective decisions. In *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas can reconstruct a process of public deliberation in contemporary society, using his refined theoretical framework organized around functional sub-systems and *lifeworld* including multiple forms of life. He seeks to show how it is possible to politically alter the relations between system and *lifeworld*, through the public sphere and the law. Since the mechanisms that coordinate action – both systemic and social – need to be legally institutionalized, the law is connected to ethical concepts and discursive processes, which produce its own rationalization process and remains anchored in the *lifeworld*. Habermas makes at least four important changes in the role of the public sphere in the process of discursive constitution of public opinion and political will.

First, the author makes clear that the public sphere, regarded as the *locus* of the argumentative discussion, cannot be understood as an “institution”, or as a “place”, since it refers to *the use* that the subjects make of communication, related especially to argumentative exchange – which Habermas (1996) calls “a *communication structure... tailored to the general comprehensibility of everyday communicative practice*” (p. 360, italics in the original). “Every encounter in which actors do not just observe each other but take a second-person attitude, reciprocally attributing commu-



nicative freedom to each other, unfolds in a linguistically constituted public space” (p. 361). This definition now based on his communicative action theory and discourse ethics, specifies the *kind of communication* that goes on in the public sphere; and the *kind of relationship* between the participants; one that retains the very least freedom and capacity to address and to be addressed by another, while granting reciprocally rights and duties as partners of communication.

Second, Habermas (1996) suggests a typology of various modalities of the public sphere, differentiated according to “the density of communication, organizational complexity, and range” (p. 374). The author speaks of the *episodic public sphere*, referring to meetings in different environments of daily life; of *public sphere of occasional publics of organized presence*, referring to gatherings and meetings in forums of voluntary associations and civil entities; and of *abstract public sphere*, referring to single readers, listeners and spectators spread globally (p. 374). In this way, reflective forms of communication take place in differentiated space, and the public sphere assumes a reticular structure encompassing multiple issues that can touch one another and members who belong to overlapping discursive arenas.

Third, taking his dual theory of society – based on system and *lifeworld* – Habermas (1996) sees the public sphere no longer as an arena that promotes a bipolar intermediation between “private persons gathered in public”, and the State, as in *Structural Transformation*, but rather as “an intermediary structure between the political system, on the one hand, and the private sectors of the *lifeworld* and functional systems, on the other” (p. 373). In this way, Habermas avoids the cognitive overburden of citizens that is generated by the expectation that lay people will be able to interpret and present effective solutions to solve highly complex problems in contemporary society. Different actors should fulfill different functions in the configuration of public deliberation. Daily conversation which spread in private or semi-public domains have a special capacity, according to Habermas, to perceive more sensitively “new problem situations”: “discourses aimed at achieving self-understanding can be conducted more widely and expressively, collective identities and need interpretations can be articulated with fewer compulsions than is the case in procedurally regulated public spheres” (p. 308). Civil associations or social movements are specially apt to “exercise public influence”: “give voice to social problems, make broad demands, articulate public interests or needs, and thus attempt to influence the political process” (p. 355). Specialists and legislators are important to appraise technical issues for an effective solution to problems, and, once politically elaborated, the dimensions of technical knowledge are “*intertwined* with the moral and ethical dimensions of social integration” (p. 351, italics in the original). Whereas preserving the individual and various collective roles within distinct institutions, Habermas suggests that political communication takes on distinct forms in different domains and the porosity among

different discursive arenas are a necessary condition for empowerment and robust communication.

Fourth and finally, Habermas (1996) proposes that public debates may be linked to different forms of argumentation related to: *pragmatic issues* – referring to discussions in which participants seek appropriate means to fulfill previously given preferences and ends (p. 159); *ethical-political issues* – referring to the discussions in which participants question current definitions and seek a self-understanding of the values, beliefs or interests are then submitted to reflection (p. 160); *issues of justice* – those that arise when the participants examine the possibility of regulating their own lives and accept programs of equal interest to all. Defying Kantian unity of moral argumentation, Habermas seeks to show that the “public use” of reason is not limited to a single concept of rationality. It may take on the pragmatic form of *negotiation* and in an effort to accomplish *commitments* to balance conflicting interests; it may take on the search for *ethical consensus* to regulate demands of self-understanding of definitions of good life and the recognition necessary for the self-realization of individuals and groups; it may also take on the search for *rational acceptability* of a universal norm of justice, in the sense that this norm being equally good for all those who find themselves in an equivalent situation. Many issues, when politicized and receiving a controversial treatment in the public sphere, become so complex that they must be considered simultaneously under pragmatic, ethical and moral aspects. In real debates, the argumentation does not follow a unique logic, but changes with the type of question and answer entertained by different participants who discriminate problems into different kinds.

These shifts in Habermas’ theory help to show the conditions for the realistic functioning of the public sphere in large and highly differentiated society. The next step in the author’s argumentation is to demonstrate how argumentation among citizens and bottom-up deliberation can reach the centre of the political system and exert any effective influence in transforming the regulation of collective life. For developing my argument, it suffices saying that Habermas recognizes the growing complexity of the role that the media has in the discursive processes of political legitimation and participation. In *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas, based on Blumler & Gurevitch (1990), introduces a normative dimension about the political functions that the media should exert in constitutional democracies. The author mentions the “normative reactions” (Habermas, 1996, p. 378) experienced by the actors who violate certain social expectations present in the ethical-professional codes of the journalists, such as to: monitor sociopolitical environment; establish meaningful agenda-setting and platforms for pluralist civic debate; help support accountability processes; encourage civil engagement; resist the obstruction to their own independence and freedom of communication, and respect members of the public as competent citizens (Habermas, 1996, p. 378).

In his most recent essays, such as “Political Communication in Media Society” (2006, 2009a) and “Media, markets and consumers” (2009b), Habermas reflects in greater detail on the interfaces that deliberative politics and opinion-making processes establish with the media. First, Habermas (2006) begins to use the idea of “system” referring to the media in contemporary society. He endorses the vision that the media system – a complex of institutions and norms, supported by a set of specialized professionals – gains relative autonomy from other systems and “operate within a functionally specific and *self-regulating* media system” (p. 419, italics in the original). This approach furnishes a more sophisticated model to explain the motivations and the consequences of media professional’s actions not as result of isolated subjects but as routines immersed in complex organizations.

Second, the “power of the media” is not treated as direct manipulation, but as a “struggle for influence”. In Habermas’ words, “apart from surreptitious advertising and corruption .... favorable media coverage cannot simply be ‘bought’” (Habermas, 2009b, p.176). He shows awareness of the complex relation that the media professionals establish with political and social agents to “select and process politically relevant content” e “intervene in both the formation of public opinions and the distribution of influential interests” (p. 419). Despite not delving into studies such as agenda-setting, framing and priming, which have investigated issues of this kind for decades in the field of communication, Habermas understands that there are trade-offs among commitment to journalistic normative criteria, media dependency on sources for the composition of stories, the wish to capture public attention and adhere to the preferences of the citizens, the desire to earn profits, and the value preferences of journalists.

Third, Habermas (2006, 2009a, 2009b) recognizes there is a considerable degree of internal differentiation in the media arena. He uses Bernhard Peters’ formulations [2002] (2007, p. 123-124) on forms of stratification with regard to opportunities for participation and influence by different categories of participants who engage in speech acts of various kinds in the media arena:

(a) *lobbyists* who represent special interest groups; (b) *advocates* who either represent general interest groups or substitute for a lack of representation of marginalized groups that are unable to voice their interests effectively; (c) *experts* who are credited with professional or scientific knowledge in some specialized area and are invited to give advice; (d) *moral entrepreneurs* who generate public attention for supposedly neglected issues; and, last but not least, (e) *intellectuals* who have gained, unlike advocates or moral entrepreneurs, a perceived personal reputation in some field (e.g., as writers or academics) and who engage, unlike experts and lobbyists, spontaneously in public discourse with the declared intention of promoting general interests. (Habermas, 2006, p. 416).

Habermas is sensitive to the need of distinguishing not only between different



#### Expanding the mass media role for the functioning of the political public sphere. 149

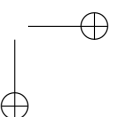
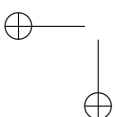
categories of participants that gain access to the media forum, but also between different communication roles; positions and functional outlooks adopted by them, from the center of the political system, from the functional systems and from the civil society (Habermas, 2006, p. 417). The media professionals produce an “elite discourse” which is fed by participants who seek access and have influence on mass communication (Habermas, 2009a, p.165). Elite in this context refers to people who exert some kind of prominence, public authority or public influence – whether of groups with intellectual competence and cultural influence; groups that exert political or economic leadership; or, spokespersons of civil associations and their influential representatives in the public domain (Peters, 2007, p. 125) – and, for this very reason, are usually chosen as sources to issue their opinions and engage in public communication.

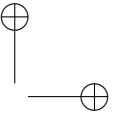
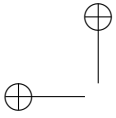
Habermas (2006) admits that the abstract and asymmetric structure of mass communication does not necessarily prevent the attainment of critical-rational debates - [this structure] “is not *per se* an obstacle to the formation of *considered public opinions*” (Habermas, 2009a, p. 166). In the “networks for wild flows of messages —news, reports, commentaries, talks, scenes and images, and shows and movies with an informative, polemical, educational, or entertaining content” (Habermas, 2006, p. 415), media professionals may mobilize “*relevant issues, required information, and appropriate contributions*” (2006, p. 418, italics in the original). Given “favorable circumstances, the media may thus display a range of “published political opinions” and generate an arena for public debate, which is healthy to democracy.

Technological mediation of civic communication is certainly essential to any theory about discursive formation of public opinion and political will in contemporary democracies. Habermas, by regarding deliberation as a truly public process, extended in time and space, admits that “no political public sphere could be put to work... without... professionals of the media system” (2006: 416). He shows the importance of the mass media to connect political communication in the public sphere with everyday life domains, forums and organizations of civil society and the center of the political system.

Missing from this picture is the distinctive forms of media through which several publics can produce and disseminate critical flows of communication – such as alternative media, media advocacy, civic journalism, computer mediated communication, including mobilization and activism over the social media. Critical civic agents of a “responsive civil society” establish various uses of the media – including the traditional media and the technologies of digital communication – to trigger public communication that may alter social relations and reshape representatives’ or officeholders’ authority. Such fluxes of communication have a great potential to perform critical functions, through horizontally linked and inclusive discursive processes.

Rather than looking at the mass media as an isolated arena, we might ask questions related to their interconnectivity with other discursive arenas and types of media



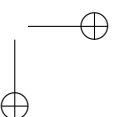
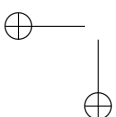


within a larger whole, with regard to the functioning of deliberative democracy. Even if Habermas does not develop these trends, it would be unfair to neglect that his revision of the public sphere has indeed opened the ground for posing normative and theoretical question about what some scholars have called a “deliberative system”. Following this vein, several theorists have contributed in various ways to evincing the complex connections among different discursive arenas, focusing on diversity of settings, agency and different forms of communication (Hendriks, 2006; Mansbridge, 1999). Through middle-level theory, some scholars have helped to define deliberative potential at distinct moments in the deliberative process, which is broken down into distinct tasks, agents, and deliberative standards (Goodin, 2005; Parkinson, 2006, 2009; Neblo 2005). Other scholars have helped illustrate the trade-offs existing between different deliberative goals (Bohman, 2007a; Goodin, 2008; Warren, 2007). In order to understand, describe and analyze not only the role of both traditional and new media but also their complex interconnectivity within the deliberative system, we will need a great deal of theory-building and empirical investigation. So far, it is from a system-level perspective that health and rational legitimacy of a deliberative democracy should be sought.

## Conclusion

In the 44 years that separate *Structural Transformation* and “Political Communication in Media Society”, Habermas’ theoretical outlook has become progressively sophisticated in dealing with the role of the media as a forum for civic debate, and less determinist in evaluating media performance and citizens behavior in contemporary democracies. In his more mature works, Habermas seeks to build a realistic framework of the conditions required to generate considered public opinions and subsequent standards to identify the pathologies of communication. He sets the grounds for one to understand the crucial importance of mass communication to promote mediation between different domains of a complex society and to operate as a forum of civic debate, before an expanded audience.

Habermas’ mature formulations do not reduce the seriousness of his criticism on the pathologies of mass communication at the beginning of his career, but, in fact, open a new horizon into ways of understanding and judging the media’s role in pre-structuring the public sphere. We should not interpret the pathologies of mass communication as general, pervasive, problems, nor as evils inherent to mass communication itself, but as problems which involve different and complex factors rooted in the systemic structures of societies and their cultural and historical contexts, which must be appraised along with democratic potentialities, through detailed empirical investigations.



## References

- ASEN, R., & Brouwer, D. C. (Ed.). (2001). *Counterpublics and the state*. New York: State University of New York.
- ARONOWITZ, S. (1993). Is democracy possible? The decline of the public in the American debate. In: B. Robbins, *The phantom public sphere* (pp. 75-93). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- BLUMLER, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1990). Political communication systems and democratic values. In: J. Lichtenberg (Ed.), *Democracy and the mass media* (pp. 24-35). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BOHMAN, J. (2007). Transforming the public sphere: communicative freedom and transnational publics. In: J. Bohman. *Democracy across borders: from Dêmos to Dêmoi* (pp. 59-99). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- CALHOUN, C. (1992). Introduction: Habermas and the public sphere. In: C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 1-50). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- CONOLLY, W. (1991). *Identity/difference: democratic negotiations of political paradox*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- CORREIA, J. C. (1998). *Jornalismo e Espaço Público*. Covilhã: Universidade da Beira Interior.
- DAHLGREN, P., & Sparks, C. (1993). *Communication and citizenship - journalism and the public sphere in the new media age*. London: Rutledge.
- DOWING, J. D. H. (2002). *Mídia radical - rebeldia nas comunicações e movimentos sociais*. São Paulo: Ed. Senac.
- ELEY, G. (1992). Nations, publics and political cultures: placing Habermas in the nineteenth century. In: G. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 289-339). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- FRASER, N. (1992). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In: C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 109-142). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- GOODIN, R. E. (2008). Innovating democracy: Democratic theory and practice after the deliberative turn. New York: Oxford University Press.
- GOODIN, R. E. (2005). Sequencing deliberative moments. *Acta Politica*, 40, 182-196.

- HABERMAS, J. (1996). *Between Facts and Norms: contributions to a discourse theory of Law and democracy*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- HABERMAS, J. (1992). Further reflections on the public sphere. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 421–461). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- HABERMAS, J. (2009b). Media, markets and consumers: The quality of press as backbone of the public sphere. In \_\_\_\_\_. *Europe: the faltering project* (pp. 131–137). Cambridge/Malden: Polity Press.
- HABERMAS, J. (2006). Political communication in media society—does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research. *Communication Theory*, 16, 411–426.
- HABERMAS, J. (1991). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (T. Burger, & F. Lawrence, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- HABERMAS, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action*. Boston: Beacon Press. v. II.
- HALLIN, D. C. (1993). *We keep America on top of the world: television journalism and the public sphere*. London: Rutledge.
- HENDRICKS, C. M. (2006). Integrated deliberation: Reconciling civil society's dual role in deliberative democracy. *Political Studies*, 54, 486–508.
- MANSBRIDGE, J. (1999). Everyday talk in deliberative system. In S. Macedo (Ed.), *Deliberative politics: Essays on democracy and disagreement* (pp. 211–242). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- NEBLO, M. A. (2005). Thinking through democracy: Between theory and practice of deliberative politics. *Acta Politica*, 40, 169–181.
- NEGT, O., & Kludge, A. (1993). *Public sphere and experience: Toward an analysis of the bourgeois and proletarian public sphere*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- PARKINSON, J. R. (2006). Holistic democracy and physical public space. *British Journal of Political Science Conference*, pp. 1–17.
- PETERS, B. (2007). The functional capacity of contemporary public spheres. In: H. Wessler (Ed.), *Public deliberation and public culture – the writings of Bernhard Peters, 1993-2005* (pp. 121-133). New York: Palgrave.



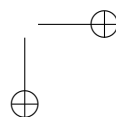
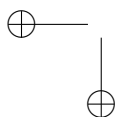
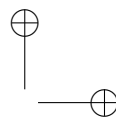
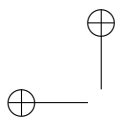
Expanding the mass media role for the functioning of the political public sphere. 153

SCHUDSON, M. (1992). Was there ever a public sphere? If so, when? Reflections on the American case. In: G. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 143-163). Cambridge: MIT Press.

STEVENSON, N. (2002), *Understanding media cultures: social theory and mass communication*. London: Sage Publications.

VILLA, D. (1992). Postmodernism and the public sphere. *American Political Science Review*, 86, 712–721.

WARREN, M. E. (2007). Institutionalizing deliberative democracy. In S. W. Rosenberg (Ed.), *Can the people govern? Deliberation, participation and democracy* (pp. 272–310). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.





## The Principle of Publicity. A socio-anthropological perspective

Samuel Mateus

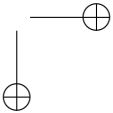
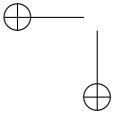
### Abstract

One of the distinctive traits on the notion of public sphere is its proximity to Kant's principle of critical publicity. We see that in the terminological assimilation between publicity (*Öffentlichkeit*) and public sphere displayed by the English translation. Indeed, the principle of critical publicity entailed in Kant's *Philosophy of Right* represents public sphere's most systematized theoretical account being the starting point Habermas uses to erect the theory of the public sphere from a critical and rational point of view. In the line of Kant, the author of *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* conceives the public sphere as the central condition to the reconciliation between politics and morality. He argues the bourgeois public sphere is characterized by citizen's public use of reason having as a goal the subjection of the political domination to reason.

Perhaps one of the strongest indications of the contemporary vitality of the theory of the public sphere lies paradoxically in its own questioning. And if we could conceive a principle of publicity independently and separated from its critical-rational form? In other words, and if we could distinguish a publicity - as a social principle - from a public sphere- seen as a historic model of that principle of publicity? Perhaps many of the conflicts and tensions in contemporary societies were better perceived if they did not privilege the political-legal foundations of the public sphere and if they contemplate the capture of the principle of publicity beyond its critical dimension.

Assuming this motto, the paper attempts to understand the principle of publicity from a socio-anthropological perspective. This means to conceive publicity as an original social principle existing in all human societies, and not resulting from a simple historical determination (as the bourgeois public sphere). In this line of thought, publicity engages a capillary principle of any social organization, manifesting itself by its communicational form in societies' symbolic processes. We will argue publicity is independent of the existence of a public sphere. It can more easily be discerned in some without-state societies assuming the role of conflict resolution and coordination of collective action. We will revisit New Guinea's Arapesh society through the work of Margaret Mead trying to demonstrate how much publicity is a social principle possessing a central role in the maintenance of social cohesion and development of a communitarian conscience, not necessarily implying the capitalized Public Opinion

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 155-168



or Public in the particular sense Enlighten reason loaned to them.

**Keywords:** Anthropology of Communication; Publicity; Public Sphere; Sociology of Communication;

## A Critical Publicity.

One of the most pervasive concepts on the history of social sciences is without doubt that of publicity. Already present in greek civilization, publicity as the general quality of public aspects encompasses multiple senses with the romans: while *publicum*, points, first of all, to the state (*res publica*), it nonetheless also means a people's general interest (*publicum conferre*) and commonality (*verba publica*). As a verb, *publicare* refers to the possibility of making someone or something public, exhibit openly to all individuals or publishing a book giving it ideas to the common knowledge.

Even so, it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that a full account of publicity as a fundamental principle of social and political action was given. Its author, as we all know, was Kant who describes a critical principle of publicity making possible the harmony between morality and politics. The historical background is not negligible to understand its premises. For 18<sup>th</sup> century second- half Germany, the present have must be seen as an uncertain and unstable moment after the *Deutscher Dualismus* motivated by the conflict of the two largest states of Germany - Austria and Prussia - from 1740 to 1866. In this political context, the social fragmentation and cultural particularisms made Enlightenment thought so promising that a culture of self-cultivation directed to creating oneself starts to emerge. The German term *Bildung* entails this cultivated process of education, and self-direction<sup>1</sup> in face of pressures to conformism that will spark the conception of an enlightened man. Thus, Kant conceives Enlightenment as liberation of self-incurred tutelage denoting a subjective maxim, to think for oneself. "Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred (*selbstverschuldet*) is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage" (Kant, 1784: 11). *Sapere aude* is the latin adage Kant uses to explain how the enlightened man reaches the maturity (*Mündigkeit*) which brings not only freedom and assurance of autonomy but also anxieties, risks and responsibilities. In contrast with intellectual dependency or immaturity (*Unmündigkeit*), thinking adults have a choice of deciding between the deference to conformity and authority and the challenging demands of its own reason.

<sup>1</sup> Pietism had also a relevant function in this process as it promoted group reading of the Bible and reflection as a means to self-transformation and personal responsibility for the social problems. Vide Pinkard, Terry (2002), *German Philosophy 1760-1860: the legacy of Idealism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.7-8



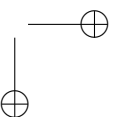
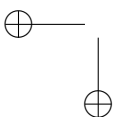
They have the faculty of making a rational self-evaluation and put its own thought on the service of a liberated spirit that frees itself from the perpetual chains of minority and dare to walk steadily towards knowledge.

Man's use of its individual reason can be made by two main modes: a private and a public one. The minor private use of reason concerns a man who talks in the name of another to a domestic audience, while a public use of reason means to use its own reason addressing freely all individuals assembled as a public (Kant, 1784: 15). It is the fundamental path to man's walk towards maturity. So, in regard to Enlightenment, thinking for oneself overlaps thinking aloud: the use of reason seems to coincide with its public use. For Kant, Enlightenment had to be mediated by a vital publicity, one where each man could debate, discuss and contest putting in practice its freedom of expression in a world of letters among a public of scholars and intellectuals. "By the public use of one's own reason I mean that use which anyone may make of it as a man of learning (*Gelehrte*) addressing the entire reading public". Enlightenment has its foundations, therefore, in three maxims: *think for itself*; *think consistently*; and *think from the standpoint of everyone else* (Donald, 2003: 47). The principle of publicity is a major aspect of Enlightenment for it makes possible that public use of one's reason on a regular, coherent, critical and collective basis.

The central notion uniting Enlightenment and Publicity may, at this light, be seen clearly: it is communication. Kant conceives reasoning as a social activity, a product of society. One communicates its thinking to other individuals and these, by its turn, communicate back their thoughts. To reason is to think with others, it is to think and reason publicly, it is to communicate. Thinking and communication are related and that is why the principle of publicity is central to Kant. "We could well say that a external power taking out men's freedom to publicly communicate its thoughts, is also stealing from them its freedom to think (...) (Kant, 1786: 52).

Publicity is the mediating principle giving individuals the ultimate way of thinking because it enables to confront and to convene a plurality of reasons. This denotes that Kant's principle entails, in this way, a critical publicity: a publicity where man makes its own rational criticism and understanding of the world in a collective assembly. For thinking to demonstrate reason, it must be critical, namely, it must submit to a discursive test made by a plurality of voices and different perspectives. Only then it can achieve understanding and coherence. Kant endorses the idea that the brainstorming of arguments and thoughts prevent the error as a plurality of perspectives will be in a better position to validate or reject one's judgments. Because reason can only be developed by communicating with others, Kant sees the principle of publicity as an absolute precondition for reason.

This relation between publicity and communication points out one more aspect. If with regard to the individual publicity meant to think for one self, with regard to humanity, it represents an objective tendency towards a just political order. In what



we may call a second part on Kant's perspective on publicity, the principle of publicity is not only imperative to man's maturity, it is also central to the development of societies. Kant sees the use of public reason as a condition to human progress. To prohibit it is to injure the rights of mankind; the public use of reason is conceived as a means to the end of collective human emancipation. So, in his *Philosophy of Right*, publicity is described as rationalizing politics in the name of morality. For Kant, publicity is a necessary condition to justice and, therefore, for right. Every juridical claim, in order to make itself universal, must include the possibility to be publicized and be judged by all. This is to say, actions referring to the rights of others (political actions) are declared to be in agreement with morality and law only as far their maxims are capable of exist publicly. The transcendental dimension of Kant's critical publicity (Kant, 1795: 165) corresponds to the *dictum*: "All maxims which require publicity, in order that they may not fail to attain their end, are in agreement both with right and politics" (Kant, 1795: 170). Therefore, "there is something wrong in a maxim of conduct which I cannot divulge without at once defeating my purpose, a maxim which must therefore be kept secret, if it is to succeed, and which I could not publicly acknowledge without infallibly stirring up the opposition of everyone" (Kant, 1795: 165). In *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* Kant explains how the law of nature may be replaced by the rule of legal norms and how politics could be transformed into morality by a strong publicity. This publicity principle was the place where empirical ends were to be brought about, and where legality came with public use of one's reason. Kant was, then, uniting the subjective and objective maxims of the principle of publicity: the public use of reason brought not only the maturity of men as also brought a superior moral order for society. It may be taken as a synonym of debateability, the maxim be such as to be appropriate for public discussion and pass the filter of an actual public, that is, a set of individuals submitting to the judgment of sound common reason, forming an ideal and rational public and aiming to the formation of objective knowledge and achievement of Enlightenment. The transcendental principle of publicity is comparable with the categorical imperative's political maxims present in the *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals*: the possibility of publicity is, here, the judicial equivalent of the moral condition of universalizability providing a test of justice of any proposed law.

One major fact on the history of the concept of publicity is its historical assimilation with a political concept such as the public sphere. Exploring the critical and transcendental aspects of Kant's principle of publicity, Habermas (1991) sketches out a model of bourgeois public sphere as it occurred in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century's Britain, France and Germany. The public sphere is defined as the public of private individuals who join in debate of issues bearing on state authority. Unlike ancient greek publicity, individuals are assumed to be formed primarily in the private realm and in the intimacy of family. So, this realm is understood as one of freedom

which should be protected from state's influence. The bourgeois public sphere, accordingly, makes the mediation between the private concerns of individuals in their familial and economic life in contrast with the demands of public and social life. It is defined as the "sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason" (Habermas, 1991: 27). Public sphere, as it occurred in London's *coffee houses*, French *salons* or German *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies), described a space of institutions and practices between the private interest of everyday life in civil society and the realm of state power<sup>2</sup>. It involved an open and rational discussion of all issues of general concern through a discursive argumentation presupposing freedom of speech and assembly, a free press and the right to participate in political debate and decision making. The social intercourse in public sphere presupposed in addition the equality of status, the rational argument as the sole arbiter of the discussion, and a critical problematization of all matters considered key to social, political and economic areas; the themes on debate became of general knowledge and were characterized by its accessibility to participation<sup>3</sup> (Habermas, 1991: 36-37). Anyone to access to cultural products like books, plays or journals<sup>4</sup> had at least a potential claim on the attention of the culture-debating public.

Habermas portrays the structure of bourgeois public sphere in a way very similar to Kant's principles of liberty of each member of society - as a man-, the equality of these with each other - as a subject- and the independency of each member of a community - as a citizen (Kant, 1793: 75). Initially constituted in the world of letters and building up a literary criticism, the bourgeois public transformed the abstract notion of the *publicum* as an adjective appointing the publicity as general principle, to a concrete *publicus*, a much more concrete set of practices. The members of the bourgeois elite, that could expect to participate in the public sphere due to its property, came to see themselves as a Public, a collective subject that, far from be only an object of state actions, designates a reflexive and discursive judgement to public authority. "The *publicum* developed into the public, the *subjectum* into the [reasoning] subject, the receiver of regulations from above into the ruling authorities' adversary" (Habermas, 1991: 26). Since public sphere stands between a private realm (civil society)

<sup>2</sup> Kellner, Douglas, *Habermas, the Public Sphere and Democracy: a critical intervention*, read at <http://gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/habermas.htm>

<sup>3</sup> This notion of accessibility had been disputed by Frasier and other authors. Here, we are only stating Habermas' theory of public sphere main attributes without considering its accuracy to the effective historical conditions.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed there is a close association between public and press readers, a play audience and all the addressees and consumers of art and literature (Habermas, 1991: 31).

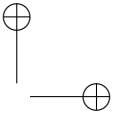
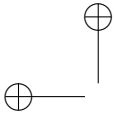
and a sphere of public authority, the Public involves a practice of rational-critical discourse on political matters which raises a normative Public Opinion, seen as the collective voice of the Public. Public Opinion is, thus, the product of an agonist, critical and reflexive communication developed on the public sphere through the public use of reason by private bourgeois individuals. It implies assuming a discursive critique that will impend under the state authority and in this way direct and organize life in society. Public sphere's Public Opinion is then a normative concept that has an ethical dimension given by the political function bourgeois public sphere assumed; and a moral side qualifying the way that function is accomplished, that is to say, the expression of the collective will of society. Public Opinion has its own political meaning, that is, a claim of rational legitimacy placed to political power in its ordering action over society (Esteves, 2003: 198).

The first half of *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*, is more rewarding than the second because to Habermas, the public sphere's refeudalization (Habermas, 1991: 195) lead ultimately to a process of decadence<sup>5</sup> that will conduct him to called for, in advanced capitalist societies, to a renewed democratization of public institutions. He tries to discern a new stand point for critique to provide new philosophical bases for critical theory. He found that in the so called linguistic turn shifting to language and communication as central features of the human lifeworld that can resist systemic imperatives of money and power. He then turns away from a historically specific grounding for democracy towards a transhistorical capacity of human communication as stated in his *Universal Pragmatics*. So, after *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas continues, in all his books since *Legitimation Crisis*, *The Theory of Communicative Action* or *Between Facts and Norms*, to seek a way to recover bourgeois public sphere's normative ideal for formal democracy.

Independently from this, our intention in this briefly outline of the main features of the theory of the bourgeois public sphere is to look at it as a model to understand the concept of publicity on its rational shape. The bourgeois public sphere is, like Kant's principle of transcendental publicity, a critical-rational political concept originating from a philosophical enquiry. Because of its empirical example, publicity was fiercely attached to the model of bourgeois public sphere and all the social and cultural dimensions the general concept of publicity seems to encompass were secondary to its political and normative aspects. Nevertheless, it may not be - we will argue - the only model possible to envisage the principle of publicity. Having contextualized

<sup>5</sup> This public sphere's corruption is also focused on the critiques to the historical imprecisions contained in Habermas's work. Vide Baker, Keith M, *Defining Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: variations on a theme by Habermas* In Calhoun, Craig, (ed.) (1992) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, MIT Press, pp. 181-211; or Ryan, Mary P, *Gender and Public Access: women's politics in nineteenth-Century America* In Calhoun, Craig, (ed.) (1992) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, MIT Press, pp. 259- 288





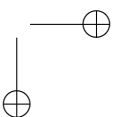
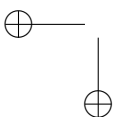
the philosophical and historical determinations of the concept, we may start to reflect upon it from another perspective.

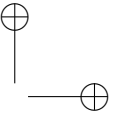
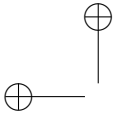
After the fundamental heritage of publicity understood as a rational realm of critique towards state's political actions, we want now to speculate about other possible perspectives on the subject, namely a socio-anthropological one. One without a consistent Public of erudite men, without a solid exercise of criticism nor a normative Public Opinion. What if publicity were a much more universal, more broad and wide-ranging notion that could be witnessed in all societies, even if they do not include the idea of a public sphere, or even a state?

### **The Principle of Publicity lies Widespread on Human Societies - the Arapesh Society.**

In order to illustrate how the principle of publicity may be understood beyond its critical shape, let's now turn to primitive societies. Its simpler organization allows us to discern more plainly how publicity works without be imperative to call for a (bourgeois) public sphere. In fact, it is in without- state societies we can expect to observe better publicity's socio-anthropological functioning in its most pure and vestigial form. In some of those societies, the principle of publicity shows independently of its critical shape or its bourgeois public sphere model. If this is so, and if we could map out some of its traces on societies without writing, then, we could possibly say that publicity can be applied beyond its critical or transcendental shape. Without state (sometimes against it<sup>6</sup>) but with an active and effective public principle of social organization, those societies are also against the model of a public sphere although they possess a strong political dimension. This can be a significant clue for it suggests publicity to be a universal principle of human society's organization. "Some conception of public, in the sense of a generalized notion of other human beings as a source of obligations and authority, has been a universal aspect of human culture" (Moore, 1984:37). According to this hypothesis, publicity can be apprehended in every type of society and independently of its technological and civilizational development. It seems to be universal though it takes on various formal forms and have different scopes according to each type of culture or society (cf. Chmielewski, 1991). This is a very important point because it dethrones modernity from the dominion it currently has on the matter of publicity. The principle of publicity would not depend on society's complexity of organization; only in its specific modes of achievement. Bourgeois public sphere would, then, be just publicity's historical determination: publicity is a universal and transversal principle encompassing the 18<sup>th</sup> century public sphere - which is obviously determined by Enlightenment- but the bourgeois public sphere's do not

<sup>6</sup> Clastres, Pierre (1989), *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, Zone Books

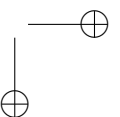
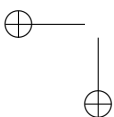




entirely coincide with or condense publicity. Every human culture would express - in different degrees though- an innate and trans-historical condition for publicity as a fundamental principle of social coordination making the link between individual and its plurality (society). Each one would develop different associations between publicity and privacy; however its principle of publicity would be dominant on social cohesion and in the organization of social life.

These hypotheses are apparently confirmed by Margaret Mead's description of Arapesh society, a Papuan-speaking people of New Guinea in Southwestern Pacific Ocean (Mead, 1937). Its many tribes stretch between the sea coast and inland plain. Their villages are dense and organized as *hamlets*, small clusters of related households. There are numerous inter-relationships between the hamlets of each district based on past or present marriages, trade companionship, or economic cooperation. Villages usually spread along the ridge tops of the hilly surroundings. The farming of yams (perennial herbaceous vines cultivated for the consumption of their starchy tubers) is the most important staple, as nutrition and ritual food. Competitive exchange of these tubers plays a large part in the political life of the society. Arapesh are without institutionalized political forms having no chiefs, hereditary leaders, priests or sanctioned soothsayers. No man's allegiance to any group (like his patrilineal kin, clan or his hereditary hamlet) is either fixed over time or binding enough to prevent following his own immediate impulses of helpfulness or hostility (Mead, 1937: 8). By this fact, the smallest event on mundane life can become a political issue leading eventually to the formation of new coalitions and animosities. This is a crucial attribute: as both alliances and hostilities are so short-lived and ephemeral, they cannot be maintained over time. The social interaction among the Arapesh is constantly calling, thus, for a principle of publicity as a realignment factor. Because Arapesh are all the time defining its social relations, they exemplify with precision the need a society has for a principle of publicity able to perform the social integration of its members.

Since alliances and hostilities are so central in Arapesh social life, they have a strong sense of publicity depending on its pair's public opinion. Mead gives the example of trespass of a pig owned by a resident on one hamlet to the garden of another hamlet's member (Mead, 1937: 8-9). Because there is not law, the moral and social procedures to this incident are not clearly defined. Because there is no state or judiciary instances, the occurrence asks for a necessarily negotiable and adaptive response. They are, hence, supported by a strong process of publicity in order to decide what the right course of action should be taken. The man whose garden has been trespassed upon faces a serious doubt: should he opt for a quiet attitude, be forgiving, avoid trouble and ask for the owner to come and get his animal; or, feeling outraged, should the Arapesh man not only kill but also eat the pig as a way to assure the payment of its garden's damages and redress his annoyance? Hence, the decision

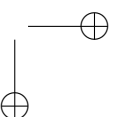
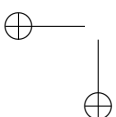


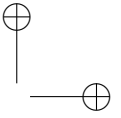
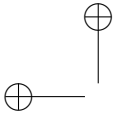


must be made between a minimum of bad feeling and a declared act of hostility. This is, beyond a social one, a political decision. The need for a strong sense of publicity, will be, in this case, achieved by sounding Arapesh' s public opinion (Mead, 1937: 9). While the pig roots in the trespassed garden, the offended individual consults his age-mates, associates and family. If they are against eating the animal, the matter is settled and it will be returned to its owner. But if they approve the eating, the incident is given to deliberation of higher-authority persons such as fathers or uncles who happen to be in vicinity. If they also agree, the pig will be eaten and shared by all the individuals the offended man invites. So, in Arapesh society public opinion functions as a directive form of social coordination, intervening in mundane events and answering for a political action even without the existence of a law, state, public sphere or even a Public. In this society, morality is not directly associated with formal and institutional politics but with a casual life politics contained if the sense of publicity. The Arapesh society depends on an impetus or inhibition of community action upon the continuing response of individuals in public opinion situations. "An Arapesh has an opinion *for* and *against* every course of action proposed, and upon the nature of these expressed opinions, who is *for* and who is *against*, depends the fate of the issue. Such a society may, perhaps, be said to represent the political importance of public opinion at its maximum, a society which depends upon personal attitudes and relies upon aggregations of emotionally involved persons to produce action" (Mead, 1937: 9).

Of course, we are not specialists on anthropological studies nor have we made studies upon Arapesh society. Yet, trusting in who is indeed a specialist on this society, such as Margaret Mead, we may discern fundamental characteristics of a principle of publicity that, in this particular case, is materialized on the form of a diffused and informal public opinion. In fact, there is a public deliberation on matters of collective relevance, each individual having the opportunity to express informally and without any form of institutionalization, its judgement on a social issue. Nevertheless, the Arapesh individual does not do that defending the interests of civil society against state's political action through an agonistically rational argumentation. On the contrary, we remark that in the example above, public opinion (*ergo* the principle of publicity) not only works upon trivial subjects as also supposes an emotionally involvement with them. There are no allusions to reason or even normativity since there is no state or a right. What we want to emphasise in Arapesh society, is the social functioning of the principle of publicity through a public consultation about a social incident; one that seems to acknowledge the existence of publicity beyond its critical conception.

It's true that this form of publicity may not be so evident on academic literature - there are no treatises, philosophical enquiries, or political studies underscoring a publicity beyond its normative aspects. However, that fact must not hinder the plausible





existence of a pervasive publicity understood as a sociological and anthropological principle. One that trusts in communication as a vast symbolic process not exclusively attained to rational debates and political critique. Publicity in Arapesh society does promote the formation of a public opinion but this has to be recognized as *vox populi*, one current of general and collective perspective on some community matter. It concerns the participation of a potentially infinite number of individuals settling unresolved practical questions. In doing so, the principle of publicity contributes to pacify society while working out social tensions among its members. In this sense, the concept of publicity comprehends a symbolic dynamic of collective action that also decides the personal contradictions individuals happen to feel. Publicity occurs, hence, not only among citizens and state but, above all, among men influencing social action. Publicity, as demonstrated by Arapesh's pig episode, above all, guides and sponsors the sense of community and collective belonging. So, we are in conditions to advance a provisional definition of publicity from this socio-anthropological standpoint: *publicity is the social principle explaining the relation between singular meaning of individual and its plural sense (society) promoting the communicative operation of symbolic mediation that contributes to the production and reproduction of a community sense of belonging, working and updating the social bond uniting a society.*

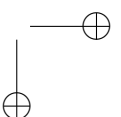
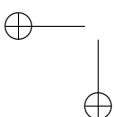
In fact, it's hard to imagine a human society without any trace of such a principle of publicity. Since society rests on a communicational work of production and reproduction of its symbols, it needs a mediating process that bridges individual and society.

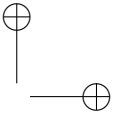
In the section to come, we proceed to make a rough draft of the principle of publicity according to the above socio-anthropological perspective. That is, given its conditional definition, what can the principle of publicity entail?

## Publicity, Social Integration and Sympathy.

The social principle of publicity enables us, also, to avoid considering a corruption or a transmutation of publicity's function just because bourgeois public sphere had suffered a refeudalization and became an acclamatory, culture consuming public (Habermas, 1991: 196). Since we separate publicity and public sphere, publicity and its critical structure as historically occurred on British, French and Germanic 18<sup>th</sup> century societies, we can continue to believe that the structural transformations on the public sphere do not mean that the principle of publicity had endured the same experience. Even if conditions to conduct a rational-critical debate in the public sphere are mitigated, that does not imply publicity itself has experienced the same deterioration.

It may be useful to recall that, although Kant's principle of publicity is configured as a political and a normative one, there are some remarks that point to a much more



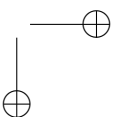
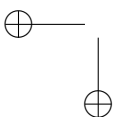


ample, all-embracing notion of the concept. Indeed, mainly in his *opus Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment*, he posits a very important fact: the connection between publicity and communication. We think this is one of the most fruitful ways of conceiving the public principle on society. Parallel to its liaison with politics and the right – which makes its critical or transcendental dimension- the principle of publicity is closely connected to a symbolic practice whatever the forms assumed (discursive, pictorial, etc). Like its critical configuration underscores, publicity is a mediating and social principle that fulfils individual expectations and harmonizes them with society. Like the bourgeois public sphere, it relies upon a quality of discourse and a quantity of participation. Yet, seen without its critical contours and illustrated by the Arapesh society, the principle of publicity – seen as a socio-anthropological one - means a different way of achieving them: it points to a more trivial and humble symbolic and communicative practice that concerns individuals as they interact in the most diverse social situations.

Drawing on Merton's work on manifest and latent functions<sup>7</sup>, Noelle-Neumann (1993: 220-234) refers to two definitions of public opinion that may be helpful to separate a publicity from a public sphere. She talks on the manifest function of public opinion as rationality, an instrumental process of opinion formation and decision making in democracy; and a latent function of public opinion seen as social control having the task to promote social integration and ensure there is a sufficient level of consensus on which decisions and actions can rely to be effective. Let's give a temporary halt in here.

Accepting these two distinctions, they easily drive us towards two other possible distinctions: a principle of critical publicity (with its model of a public sphere) and a principle of publicity, the latter presuming a diffuse mediating role, neither intended nor fully recognized, nevertheless effective and of priceless value on social integration processes. Public sphere's model, shaped by rationality, supposes a well-informed citizen capable of advancing sound judgements. It focuses on political life and controversies. Like many authors have pointed out, only a small group of citizens is sufficiently interested to actually take part on the public debate. On the other side, the principle of publicity understood as mediating symbolic process of social integration potentially affects all members of society. It is disseminated by the social tissue in every social intercourse prompting fear of isolation and social ostracism if individual decides to oppose. So, the principle of publicity, recognized as process of social control and integration is not primarily concerned with the rational quality of arguments made in everyday life. The crucial factor - like the pig episode on Arapesh society exemplifies- is how it proceeds to promote a harmony between individual and

<sup>7</sup> This distinction is illustrated by the rain dance of the Hopi tribe who lives in Arizona and New Mexico. If the dance have the stated manifest function of inducing rain in times of drought, Merton underscores that, at the same time, its performs a latent function providing the tribe with the social cohesion they need. Vide Merton, Robert (1957), *Social Theory and Social Structure*, London, The Free Press of Glencoe



the plurality of other individuals with whom he socializes. The fundamental aspect of the principle of publicity is the social consciousness, making fluids the concepts of individual and society.

In other words, publicity is first of all a matter of cohesion and consensus on values in a society reached through a communicative process that occurs in almost every social interaction. It does not absolutely depend on a Public or a public sphere model to emerge and be felt by all members of a society. According to this perspective based on Noelle-Neumann's latent function of public opinion, publicity is about ensuring a level of collective compromise through a capillary circulation on society. Its integrative function cannot be rejected, avoided or ignored by each individual. Publicity results from men's social nature and natural proclivity to fulfil their potentialities through a collective organization of life, that is, society. Seen at this light, the word "publicity" is not more exclusively associated with public reasoning, but most of all as a *public quality* in the sense of a quality concerning all issues (political, professional, personal, etc) considered relevant and having a significant importance to collective life in society. Publicity alludes to the value of visibility and accessibility; it does not only come to light as matter of individual direct arguments and convictions about state's action, but also when something is expressing an appraised social and symbolic value over the use of, for example, buttons<sup>8</sup>, badges, flags<sup>9</sup>, hairstyles<sup>10</sup>, the use of beard<sup>11</sup> or the use of symbolic clothes<sup>12</sup>. It is characterized by a flowing opinion made of various elements that come and go in a dynamic public process, in *publicization*. Publicity as something in gestation. To recall a prized conception of Tönnies (Hardt, Splichal, 2000: 89), we could say that critical publicity happens with a solid opinion, while the ideas and opinions travelling a society's publicity may be classified as a more fluid and gaseous ones. In publicity, beliefs, ideas and opinions are above all made of constant change, liberated from the particular assertion of critique, and in permanent motion in a clear dynamic process. Public opinions as *vox populi* may be ephemeral adjusting all the time its object of attention, yet, they retain its positive influence on social issues. Thus, the principle of publicity appears to be composed of many opinion constellations, from the most diverse origins and shaped in intellectual but also in playful or ordinary way.

To conclude, we will say maybe the great gain of considering a principle of publicity apart from the public sphere model lies in the bigger possibility of taking social experience as a matter of conveying a coherent idea of society through space and preserving it in time. In other words, one of the advantages of studying the principle

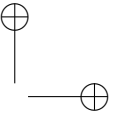
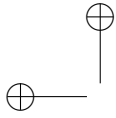
<sup>8</sup> The famous hippie slogan "*Make Peace, Not War*" printed in buttons but also in t-shirts, walls or cards.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the raise of the American flag on Iwo Jima Island's Mount Suribachi.

<sup>10</sup> The punk and gothic movements.

<sup>11</sup> Communist leaders have been known for their abundance of facial hairs.

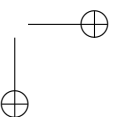
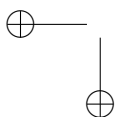
<sup>12</sup> The black shirt as a political vindication on a street manifestation.



of publicity apart its critical dimension is to link it with sympathy. By sympathy, Cooley comprehended “the entering to and sharing the minds of other persons. To converse with another, through words, looks, or other symbols, means to have more or less understanding or communion with him, to get on common ground and partake of his ideas and sentiments” (Cooley, 1998: 93). Because publicity promotes social integration making one and each of society’s members to communicate, it operates as a “sympathic” mechanism, a symbolic process that reflects the social order in which each individual lives. Connected with the social phenomenon of sympathy, publicity is apprehended as a collective view what we find distribute in particular persons. How could societies last without it?

## Bibliography

- CHMIELEWSKI, Piotr (1991), *The Public and the Private in Primitive Societies*, International Political Science Review, Vol.12,nº4, pp.267-280
- COOLEY, Charles Horton (1998), *On Self and Social Organization*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press
- DONALD, James (2003), *Kant, the Press and the Public Use of Reason*, The Public, vol.10, 2, pp.45-64
- ESTEVEES, João Pissarra (2003), *A Ética da Comunicação e os Media Modernos – legitimidade e poder nas sociedades complexas*, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991
- KANT, Immanuel (1784), *Resposta à pergunta: o que é o Iluminismo?* In Kant, Immanuel, *A Paz Perpétua e outros Opúsculos*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 1995, pp.11-19
- KANT, Immanuel (1786), *Que Significa Orientar-se no Pensamento?* In Kant, Immanuel, *A Paz Perpétua e outros Opúsculos*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 1995, pp.39-55
- KANT, Immanuel (1793), *Sobre a Expressão corrente: isto pode ser correcto na teoria mas nada vale na prática* In Kant, Immanuel, *A Paz Perpétua e outros Opúsculos*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 1995, pp.57-102
- KANT, Immanuel (1795), *A Paz Perpétua - um projecto filosófico* In Kant, Immanuel, *A Paz Perpétua e outros Opúsculos*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 1995, pp.119-171



- MEAD, Margaret (1937), *Public Opinion Mechanisms Among Primitive Peoples*, The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol.1, n°3, pp.5-16
- MOORE,B Jr (1984), *Privacy- studies in social and cultural history*, Armonk NY, ME Sharpe
- NOELLE-NEUMANN, Elisabeth (1993), *The Spiral of Silence - public opinion, our social skin*, Chicago London, The University of Chicago Press
- HARDT H, Splichal S (ed.) (2000), *Ferdinand Tönnies on Public Opinion- selections and analyses*, New York Oxford, Rowman&Littlefield Publishers





## Between EUphoria and EU-phobia: The European elections 2009 in British and German quality newspapers.

Hannah Middendorf

### Abstract

European elections offer people an opportunity to participate in the European project. However, turnout is decreasing constantly despite the European Parliament being a major player in EU legislation (EP, n.d.). The lack of participation on behalf of the electorate is said to be predominantly borne by the media. As the main source of information on Europe, mass media play an important role in creating a public sphere for European issues. (Peter, 2003; Nord & Strömbäck, 2006; Brettschneider & Rettich, 2005; Meyer, 2002).

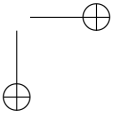
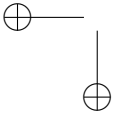
This paper examines the news coverage of the 2009 Euro-elections in British and German quality newspapers. How do the media report on the polls? Which similarities and differences exist between the national media portrayals? And does the coverage foster the emergence of a European public sphere?

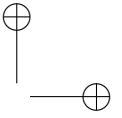
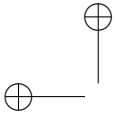
“Journalism is not produced in a vacuum.” (Harcup, 2004: 12) In fact, national journalism systems are influenced by a range of constraints. As a consequence of diverging political, economic and socio-cultural developments, German and British media systems have evolved differently (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Furthermore, German and British integration into the European project still remains contrary (George, 1998; Risse, 2001). A cross-national comparison makes it possible to explore whether these differences are reflected in diverging media coverage.

In order to survey both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the newspaper coverage, two methods were applied. The quantitative content analysis focused on three dimensions – topics, actors and journalistic presentation. A qualitative frame analysis, in contrast, analysed the main emphasis and perspective of the coverage. Referring to Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), seven frames were identified which were specifically adapted to the topic of European elections. The sample included four leading German and British newspapers. Whereas most studies analyse coverage only before the election, this project included articles four weeks before and one week after the polls.

The results reveal similarities *and* differences between the national press. With its 285 articles German newspapers published notably more articles than English papers (181). Although a national perspective is dominant in all the analysed media, the

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 169-187





British media portrayal is in fact more nationalised (52% vs. 35%). National differences also become obvious with regard to media frames and journalistic styles. On the other hand, certain characteristics apply to all newspapers. Journalistic coverage reaches its peak around the time of the elections. Hard facts and opinion pieces are very common, more literary forms, in contrast, are hardly visible. Moreover, the media portrayal is characterised largely by frames focusing on competition (23%) and political consequences (22%) rather than policy issues (14%).

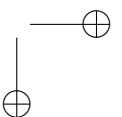
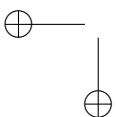
The most striking characteristic of the newspapers' election coverage is its national framing. Rather than reporting from a European perspective – and thereby fostering a European discourse – journalists domesticate this pan-European event. The findings underline that media systems remain embedded at the level of the nation state – even though political and economic systems are becoming more and more globalised. Hence, not even an occasion such as the Euro-elections is able to trigger the emergence of a European public sphere.

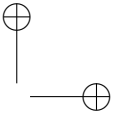
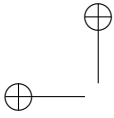
**Keywords:** European public sphere, European elections and the media, media systems, constraints in and influences on journalism

## Introduction

In June 2009, 375 million citizens in 27 EU member states were summoned to the polls to elect the members of the European Parliament. Against the backdrop of the European democracy deficit the election poses an opportunity for citizens to take part in the European project. For the third time in a row, however, turnout fell below 50% and politicians and scientists worry about the legitimacy of the EP. (Tenscher, 2005) This indifference is said to be borne also by the media (Peter, 2003; Brettschneider & Rettich, 2005). In modern societies, people receive a majority of information from the mass media – this is even more the case for the European Union. (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006; European Commission, 2006) Moreover, media play an important role for legitimizing democratic systems. Due to their complexity EU issues, however, do not correspond to the media logic but rather lack news value (Eilders & Voltmer, 2003) Bearing in mind the important functions that media fulfil for creating publicity for issues and legitimizing democracies, marginal media attention towards the Euro-elections has severe consequences. The relevance of this study is based on this precise responsibility of the mass media. The following questions are centre stage in this paper: How do German and British quality newspapers report on the polls? Which similarities and differences exist between the national media portrayals? And does the coverage foster the emergence of a European public sphere.

By conducting a cross-national analysis it is possible to examine how the national media agendas vary. Possible disparities can be explained on the basis of differences





inherent in the German and British journalism systems. These have developed over centuries and are influenced by their nationally divergent social, political, cultural and economic environment. The analysis of the contexts in which British and German journalists operate makes it possible not only to identify but also to explain national dissimilarities between the public spheres. (Esser, 1998; Thomaß, 2007)

## European public sphere

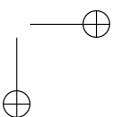
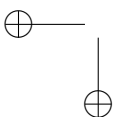
The debate about a European public sphere emerged after the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht. Parallel to the European Union's increase in power, a discussion erupted over intransparent decision-making processes and a lack of legitimacy. As a result, the term *democracy deficit* spread quickly. While the institutional integration progressed quickly, the social and emotional integration could not keep up (Beierwaltes, 2000; Adam, 2007)

Political and academic discourse agrees that a European public sphere plays a decisive role for the legitimacy of the European institutions. However, there are several approaches as to the concept and existence of a European public sphere. In general, one can differentiate between three models:

1. Pan-European (transnational) public sphere
2. Segmented transnational public spheres
3. Europeanised national public spheres (Eilders/Voltmer, 2003; Hahn et al., 2008)

The pan-European model is the most demanding. Based on the idea of national public spheres it describes a communicative space requiring transnational media, a common language and a European identity. In theory, political and technical conditions would allow for the emergence of a transnational public sphere. However, as a consequence of genuine factors such as language barriers and cultural heterogeneities this notion has been discarded as unrealistic. Accordingly, attempts to initiate pan-European media have largely failed. (Adam, 2007; Beierwaltes, 2000; Gerhards, 2000) Other research has identified segmented transnational public spheres. Conceptualised as issue-specific communicative spaces, they are often comprised of political or economic elites, interest groups or civil-society actors who build Europe-wide networks. Yet, mass media, play only a minor role in this model so that it seems unlikely that a European public sphere will evolve from these spheres. (Eilders & Voltmer, 2003; Hahn et al., 2008)

Inherent to the models elaborated above is the disadvantage that only small parts of the European citizenship participate in the public discourse whereas the model of



Europeanized national public spheres is far more inclusive. It is understood as a (synchronic) discourse on European issues, events and actors as well as their evaluation from a European angle (Gerhards, 2000). European public sphere is thereby conceived as a “patchwork of Europeanized national spheres” (de Beus & Mak, 2001, p. 354). In contrast to the concept of pan-European public sphere, the Europeanization of national communicative spaces is considered realistic.

Characteristic of both segmented transnational and Europeanized national public spheres are its fluctuation and divergence. Thus, there exist at least 27 Europeanized public spheres that vary with regard to the degree of Europeanization. (Adam, 2007)

## **Euro-election coverage**

The number of studies examining the media coverage of the Euro-elections is scarce and a majority is limited to the analysis of just one country. The most rigorous research project was conducted in 1979 for the premiere of the elections. (Holtz-Bacha, 2005) This comprehensive media attention constitutes an exception, though. Both turnout and media coverage have since remained below this level. Especially in the older EU member states the elections remain quite invisible. (Kevin, 2001; Leroy & Suine, 1994)

Whereas German and British TV stations – and commercial programmes in particular – ignore the vote largely, quality newspapers pay more attention to the event in Strasbourg. Nevertheless, European elections receive a lot less media coverage than national or regional elections. (Campbell, 2006; Wilke & Reinemann, 2005; Nehlig, 2005)

The media’s interest in the Euro-elections increases rapidly during the week before the election. After a peak around the election period media attention dies down quickly. The issue does not seem to be newsworthy enough to trigger coverage that is independent of the actual event of voting. (de Vreese, 2003a; Nehlig, 2005) Hence, one can conclude that the growing importance of the elections does not result in a rise of media coverage. The EU and the European Parliament rather compete with other issues. (Kevin, 2001) Journalists nowadays have a pragmatic attitude towards the European elections rather than a sacerdotal approach like in 1979. In other words, they treat the event like a second-order election. (de Vreese, 2003b)

Although the election itself is the main focus of media coverage, information on national issues results in diverging media agendas. (Kaid et al., 2005; Leroy & Siune, 1994; Nehlig, 2005) Similar to EU news in general, information on the Strasbourg election undergoes national adaptation. National officials, especially members of the executive and party leaders, dominate the media portrayal, whereas the candidates to the EP only seldom have their say. Due to an increased personalization of the election campaigns since 2004, though, national candidates receive more attention

from British and German journalists. (Campbell, 2006; Kaid et al., 2005; Wilke & Reinemann, 2005) Not only the content, but the evaluation as well differs in German and British media. While the former report in a neutral, informative and positive manner, providing detailed background information, the latter use their articles for EU criticism in general and propose the event as an opportunity for the voters to express their dissatisfaction with national politicians. (Kevin, 2001; Nehlig, 2005; Campbell, 2006) Since 1979, election coverage has undergone a shift. Rather than reporting on political issues, journalists frame the vote in terms of competition and conflict. The event is portrayed as a horse race, focusing on winners and losers. (Berganza, 2009; Nord & Strömbäck, 2006)

In summary, a common and striking characteristic of the election coverage is its national adaptation. Even though a European institution is up for election, it seems as though 27 national elections are taking place at the same time. By domesticating the articles, journalists increase the news value of European issues and hope to catch the audience's interest. (Firmstone, 2004) As a result of national "glasses" German and British media produce disparate agendas. More than 30 years after the premiere of the European elections Europe is still in search of a common public sphere (Nehlig, 2005).

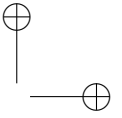
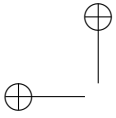
## The European election as second-order election

After the first European elections in 1979, Reif and Schmitt characterized the polls as "second-order elections"<sup>1</sup>. Whereas the results of "first-order elections", such as Presidential or Parliamentary elections, determine who will constitute the future government, second-order elections are merely decisive of less powerful offices, i.e. there is less at stake. (Reif & Schmitt, 1980)

The "less-at-stake" dimension of European elections entails a range of consequences. Due to its lesser relevance, turnout is markedly lower than at national elections. Similarly, since politicians and parties attribute the polls a lower status halfhearted campaigns are characteristic – and hardly arouse the people's interest. (ibid) In addition, the "less-at-stake" dimension affects the mass media's reaction. Unenthusiastic campaigns, indifferent electorates, the limited power of the EP – all these factors render the polls fairly uninteresting for the media. Empirical studies confirm the vicious circle that results from the image of allegedly irrelevant Euro-elections. (Holtz-Bacha, 2005)

Apart from the three elements already mentioned, this study includes a fourth facet: the European Union and the EP, respectively. The Strasbourg institution lacks

<sup>1</sup> In 1997, Reif suggests categorizing the Euro-elections as third-order-elections because their outcome only determines the composition of a Parliament, but not the executive.



certain powers and its election has no consequence as to whether a government remains in office. As a consequence, decisive incentives for the three groups to become engaged in the voting process are missing. Furthermore, the EU in general is regarded as technocratic, distant and intransparent. Brussels thus has less news value than national politics. (Gerhards, 2000; Hix & Marsh, 2007)

Following Tenschler (2005), I describe this reciprocal dilemma as a “ménage à quatre”. A lack of engagement is characteristic of the election campaign and its communication. According to the second-order status of the event, the actors involved show only second-order engagement. However, a very intensive campaign would be necessary in order to mobilize the electorate and to put an end to the – from the point of view of democracy theory – devaluation of the European elections.

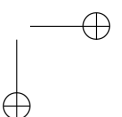
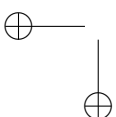
## Journalism cultures

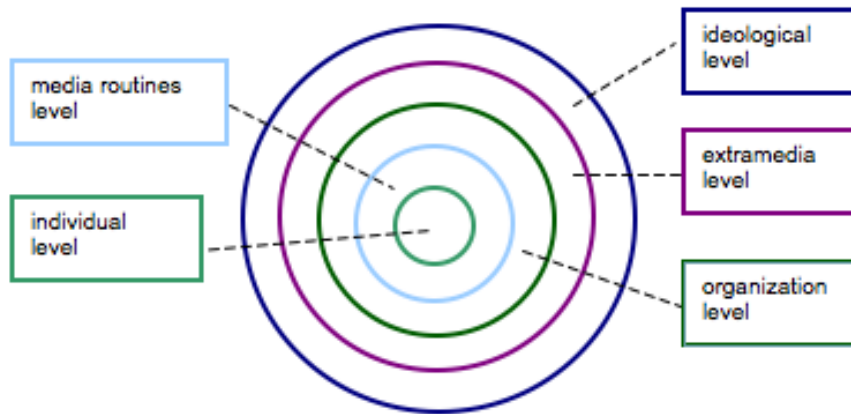
Based on the assumption that journalism cultures are determined by certain imperatives, the following paper analyses how media coverage in British and German newspapers differs and examines the reasons for this divergence. “Journalism is not produced in a vacuum. Journalists work within a range of constraints and influences; structural factors that affect their output.” (Harcup, 2004: 12) Embedded in their respective societies and influenced by country-specific factors, journalism systems vary considerably from country to country – even despite transnational developments such as the European integration. (Thomaß, 2007)

Scientists researching the influences on journalism systems have developed a heuristic to identify individual impact factors. Although the models vary in detail the basic idea is similar: The range of influences is differentiated into numerous impact spheres. In German-speaking countries, for example, the most popular approach was designed by Weischenberg (Hanitzsch, 2009). Referring to the metaphor of an onion, he identifies four influential levels: media systems, media institutions, media products and media actors. Similarly, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) designed a circular model for the Anglo-American world, which locates the external and internal influences on five levels. Apart from the four contexts mentioned above, they identify a fifth sphere: work routines.

Several other researchers, including Preston (2009) and Esser (1998) also developed approaches to conceptualize the impact factors. In a meta-analysis of these studies, Hanitzsch concludes that a five-level structure, including the individual, organizational sphere as well as the level of routines, media structures and media systems, is the most common (2009).

The context spheres differ as to how they impact on the journalistic system. Beginning in the centre of the model, the hierarchy of influence increases when going to the outer spheres. (Weischenberg, 1994; Esser, 1998) Connected by interaction and





reciprocal effects, the individual elements do not exert influence in an isolated manner but in combination with others. Preston describes this process as an “interplay of influences” (2009: 13). Research nowadays assigns the strongest impact to the organizational and institutional spheres. Additionally, political, economic and legislative determinants influence journalists’ work. More subtle and indirect, these factors have an impact on the organizational level which in turn influences the journalists. (Preston, 2009; Hanitzsch, 2009)

To sum up: Journalists are exposed to a range of imperatives which influence the production of journalistic content. The – mostly nationally induced – dissimilarities regarding the context in which journalism operates have resulted in the emergence of differing journalism cultures. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, media systems remain embedded in cultural backgrounds with a strongly national character – a division that becomes obvious also with regard to a transnational issue such as the European elections. (Preston, 2009; Thomaß, 2007)

## Research design

In order to answer the research questions noted above this study employed two methods:

1. (quantitative) content analysis
2. Frame analysis

Content analyses generate data concerning formal characteristics and the content of texts, in this case: newspaper articles. The content analysis focused on three di-

mensions: topics, protagonists and journalistic presentation. However, this method analyses only quantitative aspects of texts but not qualitative information. In order to achieve a broad range of data a frame analysis was conducted, too. Frame analyses allow a researcher to identify the use of certain characteristic media frames as well as the perspective of media coverage. Referring to Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), seven frames were identified which were adapted to the issue of European elections. These included: political consequences, competition, conflict, issue, apathy, education, personalization and conflict. Besides, a meta-frame analysed the degree to which an article reports from a national, a European or a Europeanized angle.

Both methods are part of a cross-national comparative framework. Wirth and Kolb suggest two contrasting approaches for conducting comparative research: the most similar systems design and the most different systems design (2006). By comparing Germany and the United Kingdom, this study makes use of the most similar systems design. This approach allows a researcher not only to identify potential similarities and differences, but also to explain these. Germany and the UK are interesting research objects because they are large and strong European political and economic players. Furthermore, they also share similar socio-cultural and ideological characteristics. However, both countries have a diverging EU policy. While Germany is regarded as one of the driving forces behind European integration, the UK's policy towards Brussels is reluctant. London does not support a further transfer of national sovereignty and has opted out of several EU initiatives such as the Euro. (Marcussen et al., 2001; Woyke, 2004; George, 1998; Wollenweber, 1998; Butter, 2009)

The sample includes two leading newspapers per country: *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) as well as the *British Times* and *Guardian*. The selected print media cover both the liberal and the conservative spectrum and their circulation is similar. These media were deliberately chosen because as quality media they play an important role for other national mass media (Siebel, 2008). With its selection of countries and newspapers, the study does not claim representativeness.

The research period comprised five weeks; four weeks before the vote and the week following the election. Most studies in contrast only analyse the coverage before the polls (e.g. Kevin, 2001; Campbell, 2006). The period covers the "hot phase" of the election campaign during which parties and politicians use the public to gain support. The selected research period also makes it possible to examine how the coverage varies from week to week.



## Findings

### Formal criteria

During the research period the four newspapers published 466 articles on the Euro-elections. Three quarters of the articles report on the polls as the main issue of the article, whereas 23% focus on a different main topic.

Sample	FAZ		SZ		Times		Guardian		Total	
	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
Main Topic	112	84%	107	70%	68	76%	71	77%	358	77%
Subsidiary Topic	21	16%	45	30%	21	24%	21	23%	108	23%
Total	133	100%	152	100%	89	100%	92	100%	466	100%

**Tabela 1:** Amount of coverage.

With regard to the number of articles in the newspapers, the figures differ greatly. The data show that the dissimilarities run along national and not editorial lines. Times and Guardian produced app. 90 articles. SZ and FAZ, in contrast, paid a lot more attention to the election. The quantitative gap might be a result of the differences concerning the number of correspondents in Brussels. In total, FAZ and SZ have nine correspondents, the Times and Guardian only three.

Since EU coverage varies according to the occasion of key events the following findings are not surprising: During the run-up to the polls, the number of articles increased considerably. While the newspapers hardly published news during the first three weeks, 75% of all articles can be found in week four and five. Media attention thus does not grow linearly, but rather exponentially. The lowest number of articles was published during the first week of the research, the highest number in contrast in week five, i.e. after the election.

Looking at the question of who writes about this European event, the answer is very clear: Journalists working at the head offices, and not the correspondents, are responsible for a majority of the coverage.

Nearly half of the entire coverage is produced by the editorial offices in London, Frankfurt and Munich whereas only 12% is written in Brussels. Another 20% is the work of foreign correspondents. Considering the quantitative distribution of journalists, this result is not surprising. News agencies and external authors do not play a role in reporting the polls. Interviews with EU journalists suggest a close cooperation between correspondents and head offices (Adam & Berkel, 2004; Firmstone, 2004). However, this relationship is not reflected in the journalists' daily work: Less than 1% of all articles were written by both correspondent *and* editor. This finding indicates a clear separation of responsibilities, possibly caused by the distance between the

Authors	EU corresp.	Foreign corresp.	Home office	No authors	News agency	Corresp. and head office	External author
%	12,2	19,3	43,6	16,5	1,9	0,4	1,3

**Tabela 2:** Authors.

offices. A closer differentiation between articles that discuss the polls as main and subsidiary issue reveals that the author varies depending on the emphasis of the article. Whereas only one third of the coverage produced by the head offices addresses the elections as the main point of interest, 60% of the articles written by correspondents focus on the vote itself.

## Topics

The outcome, campaign and opinion polls are the main focus in the newspapers. The portrayal of the future distribution of seats in the European Parliament – in other words of winners and losers – accounts for more than a third of the entire media coverage. The increase in horse race coverage, i.e. the presentation of the European vote as a competition constituted in previous studies (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006; Berganza, 2009) also becomes obvious in this study – at the expense of other topics. The audience finds only little information on the electoral system, the European Parliament or the candidates. A discussion of EU policies or of the democratic potential inherent to the elections is equally absent.

Similar to the amount of coverage, differences concerning the topics of the election coverage run along a national line. The German newspapers published a broader range of issues than the British media. Contrary to 31 topics discussed in SZ, the Guardian features only 18 subject areas. Moreover, the London papers hardly put EU-related issues on the agenda. Rather than focusing on the campaign, the turnout or information on the EP like their German colleagues, British journalists are more concerned with their national parties and the consequences the predicted results might have for the Labour government. The clear separation of responsibilities between the head and Brussels offices mentioned above becomes obvious also when taking a closer look at the topics discussed in the media. EU correspondents are responsible for EP- and EU-related articles, whereas the coverage in the head offices revolves around

Main topic	Campaign	Candidates	MEP	Party	Turnout	Electoral system	Consequence of results	Results (figures)
%	9,7	3,9	2,1	7,9	5,6	1,7	21	7,3

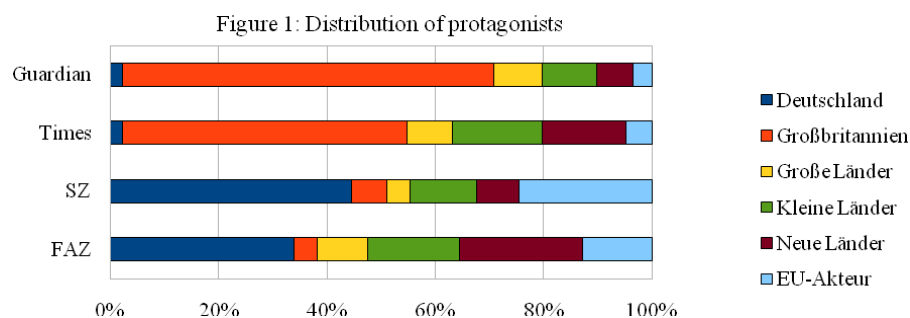
**Tabela 3:** Main topics of the election coverage.

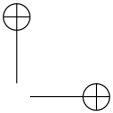
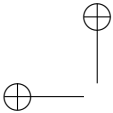
the campaign, turnout and party politics. The distribution of workload among the journalists hints at clear structures within the media organizations.

### Protagonists

Even though the elections to the European Parliament are a genuinely European event, EU officials feature only seldom as protagonists (13%). Instead, national protagonists from Germany and the UK dominate the agenda. They account for more than 50% of all actors. People from other EU countries are mentioned in one out of three articles. The national adaptation of news is a central characteristic of the media portrayal in the newspapers analysed.

The British media in particular limit their focus to protagonists from the UK. The proportion of national protagonists ranges from 50% (Times) to 66% (Guardian); less than 5% are Brussels officials. Thus, EU actors represent the smallest group portrayed in the British media. It is quite remarkable that the EU-friendly Guardian features less EU protagonists than the Times, who is said to be more skeptical towards Brussels. (Butter, 2009)





Just like their British colleagues, German journalists concentrate on German protagonists. Nevertheless, SZ and FAZ include more actors from other countries as well as EU officials, who account for 13% (FAZ) and 24% (SZ), respectively. Bearing in mind that the German papers publish nearly twice as many articles as the London media, one can conclude – as previous studies have already suggested (e.g. Campbell 2006) – that a more extensive coverage entails an increased visibility of protagonists.

The context of the election coverage

In the following paragraphs I will discuss the results of the frame analysis. The aim of the analysis is to identify the context in which the election coverage is presented.

European or national framing?

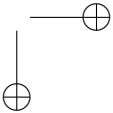
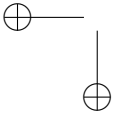
Nearly every other article has a European framing. In contrast, 42% are embedded in a national context. Roughly 10% have a Europeanized reference frame, i.e. both the national and the European sphere are represented in the text. Thus, in one out of ten articles journalists adapt the news for their national audience while maintaining a European angle at the same time.

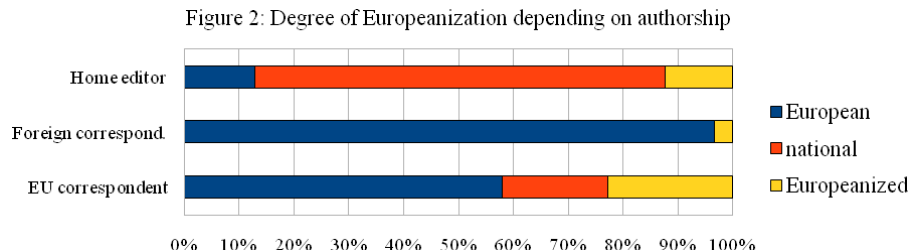
National	European	Europeanized
42%	47%	10%

Tabela 4: Perspective of election coverage.

The interrelation between authorship and media coverage elaborated above also applies for the perspective of the election news. A vast majority of articles written by foreign correspondents is characterized by a European frame. Their colleagues in Brussels also prefer this framing: 60% of their coverage is European, only one out of five articles is in contrast nationalized. In turn, news produced in the head offices often undergoes national adaptation. 75% of the entire coverage refers to the UK and Germany, respectively.

The differences do not merely depend on the authorship but also on the newspaper itself. The more nation-centred coverage in the British print media was also identified for the usage of frames. The Guardian in particular reports from a national perspective, whereas in the Times national and European frames are balanced. The coverage in the SZ is similar to the Times. This result is surprising considering the variety of European topics and protagonists identified for the SZ. A European angle is





characteristic of the FAZ coverage in which journalists attribute a European reference in more than 60% of the articles.

Referring to Semetko & Valkenburg's frame "economic consequences" (2000) the following study analysed the popularity of the adapted frame "political consequences". 22% of the entire coverage reports on the consequences of the outcome. It is interesting that the implications of the vote for national politics are discussed more often than those for the institutions in Brussels. Journalists apply the consequences frame in 30% of all national articles, but only in one out of five European articles. A further striking finding becomes obvious when analyzing both the consequences and the competition frame. Journalists often combine these contexts. 50% of all articles with a consequence frame also contain a competitive perspective.

Unlike the variables analysed before there are only small differences as to the popularity of the consequences frame in the different media. Merely the Times concentrates less on this context. The usage of this frame does not diverge nationally. It rather seems as if the outcome of the vote has universal news value.

## Competition frames

International studies emphasize an increase of campaign-related news at the expense of policy issues (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006; Berganza, 2009). The following data confirm this trend: The polls are portrayed as a competition whose outcome decides on winners and losers. In 23% of the coverage competitive framing dominates and is thus the most popular context of the election news. The consequences and horse race frames account for nearly 50% of the entire media coverage. Thus, nearly every other article reduces the EU vote to a competitive or consequential perspective.

Similar to the consequences frame, the disparities between the newspapers as to the usage of this context do not run along national lines. FAZ and Guardian prefer the frame (29% and 26%), whereas SZ and Times journalists only use it in 20% of their articles. The diverging findings suggest that individual media set their own focus despite writing about a common topic.

## The use of other frames

Due to the limited space I cannot discuss all seven frames in detail. I focused on the political consequences and competition frame because, firstly, they are the most common contexts and secondly, they confirm a trend already identified by previous research: namely, the increase of horse race framing at the expense of policy issues.

Frame	Consequence	Competition	Issue	Apathy	Education
%	21,9	23	13,5	8,4	3,2

**Tabela 5:** Newspaper frames.

With 13,5% of all articles the issue frame is far less common than the consequences and competition frames. Notwithstanding, it ranks 3 out of 7. Taking a closer look at the questions that were answered to identify the frames, it becomes obvious that the legislative power of the EP as well as the details of policies passed by the MEPs are discussed only marginally. Unlike the frames examined so far, the use of the issue frame differs nationally. FAZ and SZ journalists embed their articles in an issue context in 18% of the cases, whereas the frame accounts for only 12% of Guardian news and 2% of the coverage in the Times. The lack of issue coverage in British newspapers might be a result of the competitive press market. Journalists possibly refrain from publishing articles with little news value – such as issue articles – to meet audience expectations.

Previous studies have emphasized that parties as well as citizens do not show a euphoric attitude towards the Strasbourg polls. The campaign lacks engagement and turnout is consistently low. Similarly indifferent, the media do not pursue a pro-active media agenda. (Tenscher & Maier, 2009; de Vreese, 2003a) Not surprisingly, the apathy frame, which focuses exactly on this lack of engagement, is fairly unimportant. It ranks 6 out of 7 on a list of frames. Obviously, journalists do not consider it necessary to elaborate on this aspect. Analytical discussions about the reasons of the apathy or how to mobilize the electorate are only marginal.

Interviews with EU journalists have shown that the lack of knowledge of their audience is a major problem for reporting on Brussels (Firmstone, 2004; Tenscher & Maier, 2009). However, they do not seem to use the Euro-elections as an opportunity to narrow this gap. Only 3% of the entire coverage aims at educating the readers. This frame is by far the most irrelevant of all. The Times neglects this frame completely, whereas the Guardian attributes this framework in 5% of its articles. The FAZ is similarly keen to provide relevant background information, the SZ, however, uses this frame in less than 3% of its coverage. Similar to the consequences and competition frame, national differentiations do not exist. An analysis of the time structure of the education frame underlines that journalists include this aspect only in week three and

four. Hence, the readers receive merely little information at short notice. A more continuous and extensive framing in this respect might increase turnout (Wilke & Reinemann, 2005).

The conflict frame ranks 4 out of 7 and is particularly popular in the British media. A study by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) indicates that framing EU coverage in terms of conflicts is a common strategy. 12% of newspaper coverage focuses its attention on arguments, conflicts and criticism. A more differentiated analysis as to the use of the frame in the individual papers illustrates that British newspapers emphasize conflict twice as often as German media – the differences run along a national line.

Conflict frame	FAZ	SZ	Times	Guardian	Total
%	9	9,2	18	16,3	12,2

**Tabela 6:** The conflict frame in newspaper election coverage.

The popularity of the conflict frame in the Times and Guardian has two reasons. Firstly, the competition on the British press market has caused an increasing “boulevardization” of broadsheets ([E0?] broadloids) (Esser, 1998). An emphasis on conflict makes an article more newsworthy. Secondly, in the weeks before the election the expenses scandal of the British Parliament dominated the media landscape – an issue that bears conflict potential.

In summary, the findings indicate that a common event does not necessarily entail homogeneous media coverage. The numerous dissimilarities rather underline the range of influences on the mass media. These factors seem to differ on a national level since the disparities among the four media run mostly along a British-German line.

## Conclusion

The aim of the study was to examine how national journalism cultures impact on media output or whether Europeanization processes entail a transnational public sphere. The data underline both similarities and differences as to the media coverage in the four newspapers analysed. The national adaptation is a striking characteristic of the media portrayal and it becomes obvious in all dimensions of the analysis. Rather than reporting from a European angle – and thereby fostering a European discourse – the newspapers domesticate the event. This heterogeneity reflects the fact that journalism cultures are embedded at a national level. While the political and economic systems operate at a global level, media systems have not transnationali-

zed. Gerhards' conclusion (2000) that public spheres are predominantly national is confirmed by the study.

The national divergence of the media portrayal points out numerous influences on journalism systems. The impact of determinants such as the press market, national EU politics or editorial resources on media coverage have become obvious. Contrary to their German colleagues, for example, British correspondents hardly reported on the Euro-elections. The findings indicate that journalism does not operate in a vacuum but that a number of imperatives influence the journalists and thus media content.

As for the concept of a European public sphere the only realistic option is the idea of Europeanized national public spheres. However, not a European angle, but national adaptation is the dominant characteristic of the newspaper coverage – and of the British media in particular. The editorial line in all four newspapers is neither EUphoric nor EU-phobic – but rather indifferent and national.

## References

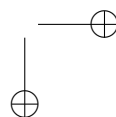
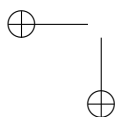
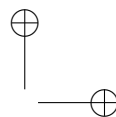
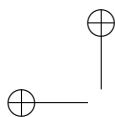
- ADAM, Silke. *Symbolische Netzwerke in Europa. Der Einfluss der nationalen Ebene auf europäische Öffentlichkeit. Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich*, Köln, Halem, 2007.
- ADAM, Silke, BERKEL, Barbara, *Final case report on communication strategies of the media. Germany*, 2004, retrieved from <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>, 03.05.2011.
- BEIERWALTES, Andreas, *Demokratie und Medien. Der Begriff der Öffentlichkeit und seine Bedeutung für die Demokratie in Europa*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2000.
- BERGANZA, Rosa, Framing the European Union and Building the Media Agenda. The 2004 European Parliamentary Elections in the Spanish Daily Press, *Journal of Political Marketing*, 8(1), 59-69, 2009.
- BRETTSCHEIDER, Frank, RETTICH, Markus, Europa – (k)ein Thema für die Medien, in Jens Tenscher (Ed.), *Wahl-Kampf um Europa. Analysen aus Anlass der Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament 2004* (pp. 136-156), Wiesbaden, VS, 2005.
- BUTTER, Claudia, Getrennt vereint? – Die Debatte um die Europäische Verfassung in den drei großen Ländern der EU, in Melanie Tatur (Ed.), *Nationales oder kosmopolitisches Europa. Fallstudien zur Medienöffentlichkeit in Europa* (pp.119-172), Wiesbaden, VS, 2009.
- CAMPBELL, Vincent, A journalistic deficit? A comparative content analysis of British television news coverage of the 1994 and 2004 European election campaigns, *Journalism Studies*, 7(4), 593-609, 2006.

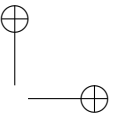
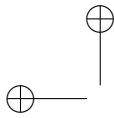


- DE BEUS, Jos, MAK, Jeanette, The missing European public, *Acta Politica*, 36(4), 339-357, 2001.
- DE VREESE, Claes H., *Communicating Europe*, 2003a, retrieved from <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/89.pdf>, 03.05.2011
- DE VREESE, Claes H., Television Reporting of Second-Order Elections, *Journalism Studies*, 4(2), 183-198, 2003b.
- EILDERS, Christiane, VOLTMER, Katrin, Zwischen Deutschland und Europa. Eine empirische Untersuchung zum Grad von Europäisierung und Europa - Unterstützung der meinungsführenden deutschen Tageszeitungen, *M&K*, 51(2), 250-270, 2003.
- ESSER, Frank, *Die Kräfte hinter den Schlagzeilen. Englischer und deutscher Journalismus im Vergleich*, Freiburg, Alber, 1998.
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Eurobarometer 64*, 2006, retrieved from [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64\\_de\\_nat.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_de_nat.pdf), 03.05.2011.
- FIRSTSTONE, Julie, *Final case report on communications strategy of the media. United Kingdom*, 2004, retrieved from <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>, 03.05.2011.
- GEORGE, Stephen, *An Awkward Partner. Britain in the European Community*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- GERHARDS, Jürgen, Europäisierung von Ökonomie und Politik und die Trägheit der Entstehung einer europäischen Öffentlichkeit, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie. Sonderheft Nr. 40*, 277-305, 2000.
- HAHN, Julia et al., *Europa als Gegenstand politischer Kommunikation: Eine Fallstudie zur deutschen EU-Ratspräsidentschaft*, Berlin, Frank & Timme, 2008.
- HANITZSCH, Thomas, Zur Wahrnehmung von Einflüssen im Journalismus. Comparative Befunde aus 17 Ländern, *M&K*, 57(2), 153-173, 2009.
- HARCHUP, Tony, *Journalism. Principles and Practice*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage, 2004.
- HIX, Simon, MARSH, Michael, Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections, *The Journal of Politics*, 69(2), 495-510, 2007.
- HOLTZ-BACHA, Christina, Massenmedien und Europawahlen: low key campaigns – low key response, in Christina Holtz-Bacha (Ed.), *Europawahl 2004: Die Massenmedien im Europawahlkampf* (pp.7-34), Wiesbaden, VS, 2005.

- KAID, Linda Lee et al., Kampagnen im neuen Europa: Die Darstellung der Europawahl 2004 in den Medien, in Christina Holtz-Bacha (Ed.), *Europawahl 2004: Die Massenmedien im Europawahlkampf* (pp.228-251), Wiesbaden, VS, 2005.
- KEVIN, Deirdre, Coverage of the European Parliament Elections of 1999: National Public Spheres and European Debates, *Javnost – The Public*, 8(1), 21-38, 2001.
- LEROY, Pascale, SIUNE, Karen, The Role of Television in European Elections: The Cases of Belgium and Denmark, *European Journal of Communication*, 9(1), 47-69, 1994.
- MARCUSSEN, Martin et al., Constructing Europe? The Evolution of Nation-State Identities, in Thomas Christiansen (Ed.), *The Social Construction of Europe* (pp.101-121), London, Sage, 2001.
- NEHLIG, Silke, Berichterstattung über den Europawahlkampf 2004 im deutsch - englischen Vergleich, in Christina Holtz-Bacha (Ed.), *Europawahl 2004: Die Massenmedien im Europawahlkampf* (pp.197-227), Wiesbaden, VS, 2005.
- NORD, Lars. W., STRÖMBÄCK, Jesper, Game is the Name of the Frame: European Parliamentary Elections in Swedish Media 1995-2004, in Michaela Maier, Jens Tenscher (Ed.), *Campaigning in Europe – Campaigning for Europe* (pp.191-205), Berlin, Lit, 2006.
- PETER, Jochen, *Why European TV news matters? A cross-nationally comparative analysis of TV news about the European Union and its effects*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2003.
- PRESTON, Paschal, *Making the News. Journalism and news cultures in Europe*, London, Routledge, 2009.
- REIF, Karl-Heinz, SCHMITT, Hermann, Nine Second-Order National Elections – A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results, *European Journal of Political Research*, 8(8), 3-44, 1984.
- SANDER, Wolfgang, HAARMANN, Julia, NOÉ, Matthias, *Europawahl 09. Sachanalyse*, (no year), retrieved from <http://www.bpb.de/methodik/CECV0Y.html>, 12.08.2010.
- SEMETKO, Holli A., VALKENBURG, Patti M., Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News, *Journal of Communication*, 50(2), 93-109, 2000.
- SHOEMAKER, Pamela J., REESE, Stephen D., *Mediating the Message. Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*, New York, Longman, 1991.

- SIEBEL, Frank, Der Mythos der Amerikanisierung. Neue Studie zur Wahlkampfberichterstattung, *Journalistik Journal* Nr. 2, 2008, retrieved from <http://journalistik-journal.lookingintomedia.com/?p=151>, 13.08.2010.
- SIUNE, Karen, The Campaigns on Television: What Was Said and Who Said It, in Jay G. Blumler (Ed.), *Communicating to Voters. Television in the First European Parliamentary Elections* (pp.223-240), London, Sage, 1983.
- TENSCHER, Jens, Wahl-Kampf um Europa. Eine Einführung, in Jens Tenscher (Ed.), *Wahl-Kampf um Europa. Analysen aus Anlass der Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament 2004*(pp.7-28), Wiesbaden, VS, 2005.
- TENSCHER, Jens, MAIER, Michaela, European Parliamentary Elections 2004. Studies on Political Campaigning and Media Framing of a Second-Order Event, *Journal of Political Marketing*, 8(1), 1-6, 2009.
- THOMAS, Barbara,(Ed.),*Mediensysteme im internationalen Vergleich*,Konstanz,UVK.
- WEISCHENBERG, Siegfried, Journalismus als soziales System, in Klaus Merten, Siegfried. J. Schmidt, Siegfried Weischenberg (Ed.), *Die Wirklichkeit der Medien. Eine Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaft* (pp.427-454), Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag,1994.
- WILKE, Jürgen, REINEMANN, Carsten, Auch in der Presse immer eine Nebenwahl? Die Berichterstattung über die Europawahlen 1979-2004 und die Bundestagswahlen 1980-2002 im Vergleich, in Christina Holtz-Bacha (Ed.), *Europawahl 2004: Die Massenmedien im Europawahlkampf* (pp.153-173), Wiesbaden: VS, 2005.
- WIRTH, Werner, KOLB, Steffen, Äquivalenz als Problem: Forschungsstrategien und Designs der komparativen Kommunikationswissenschaft, in Frank Esser, Barbara Pfetsch (Eds.), *Politische Kommunikation im internationalen Vergleich. Grundlagen, Anwendungen, Perspektiven* (pp.104-131), Wiesbaden, VS, 2003.
- WOLLENWEBER, Leif-Erik,*Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung? Großbritannien in der Europäischen Union*, Duisburg, Gerhard Mercator Universität, 1998.
- WOYKE, Wichard, *Deutsch-französische Beziehungen seit der Wiedervereinigung. Das Tandem fasst wieder Tritt*, Wiesbaden, VS, 2004.





## Opinião Pública, média e líderes de opinião: um estudo exploratório sobre a influência dos média e dos líderes de opinião na formação da Opinião Pública.

Miguel Midões

### Abstract.

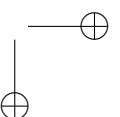
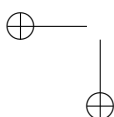
O reduzido número de estudos, em português, sobre a temática da formação de Opinião Pública levou à realização desta investigação. Partindo do princípio de que a Opinião Pública existe, embora tendo em conta argumentos controversos de determinados autores, este estudo tenta perceber de que forma é a Opinião Pública abordada ao longo dos tempos e a que influências está sujeita no Espaço Público, revisitando autores como Habermas, Arendt, Lippmann, Neumann, McCombs, entre muitos outros.

Hoje, com as novas tecnologias e com a adesão às mesmas por parte dos meios de comunicação social, de que modo se forma a Opinião Pública, tendo em conta teorias como *Agenda-Setting*, *Espiral do Silêncio*, *Líderes de Opinião* e os diversos fluxos de pressões (sociais, económicos, políticos)? A investigação pretende ainda saber quem exerce mais influência na formação da Opinião Pública: os meios de comunicação ou líderes de opinião?

Para clarificar esta questão foi realizado este estudo exploratório, para o qual se reuniu uma amostra não representativa, dividida em grupos. A todos os elementos foi aplicada a mesma entrevista, com perguntas abertas e fechadas, sobre três temas da actualidade de 2009: nacional, regional e local. Um dos grupos foi sujeito a estímulos dos meios de comunicação de massas: rádio, imprensa e televisão; o outro esteve sujeito a estímulos de líderes de opinião. Posteriormente, todos responderam a outra entrevista, igual à aplicada no primeiro momento, a fim de auferir a possível mudança de opiniões.

O estudo realizado permite concluir que houve mudança de opinião, tanto quantitativamente como qualitativamente, constatando-se influência na formação de opinião, muito embora não se tenha conseguido estabelecer uma causalidade unívoca, não se apurando quem exerce mais influência, se os média, se os líderes de opinião. Verificou-se ainda que nas questões mais fechadas, ocorre uma maior mudança de opinião, denotando-se também que mesmo quando a opinião é mantida, existe uma mudança no fundamento da mesma. Sublinha-se que existe alteração de opinião tanto no grupo que foi exposto aos estímulos dos meios de comunicação, como no grupo que esteve exposto aos estímulos dos líderes de opinião.

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 189-199





**Palavras-chave:** Opinião Pública; Média; Líderes de Opinião; Comunicação Política; Influências; Esfera Pública.

## Introdução.

A Opinião Pública é tida muitas vezes como o reforço da notícia veiculada pelos mais diversos meios de comunicação social. Mas, até que ponto esta é uma opinião isenta, clara e não influenciada pelos agentes económicos, sociais e políticos, e até pelos próprios meios de comunicação, que se encontram hoje cada vez mais influenciados e dominados pelos grande grupos económicos?

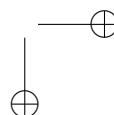
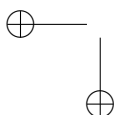
A rotina produtiva dos média está a ser influenciada por agentes externos (por forças políticas) que condicionam a informação que chega ao público e o mundo político aproveita a comunicação para fazer prevalecer as suas ideias e as suas convicções.

Ao longo da história surgem vários cenários apontados como sendo os ideais à formação da Opinião Pública, como por exemplo a *Agora* grega, o espaço público por excelência. Espaços onde são debatidos os interesses dos cidadãos, das nações e dos povos. Mas, e qual é hoje o espaço público ideal? O espaço onde o cidadão forma livremente a sua opinião.

Com este estudo exploratório pretende-se tentar analisar o modo como a população forma uma opinião sobre determinado assunto e a que influências está sujeita e como estas condicionam a sua opinião. Quem persuade, manipula e/ou influencia a população a tomar determinada decisão. Média ou líderes de opinião? Estarão os líderes de opinião relegados para segundo plano, nesta sociedade mediática e adepta das TIC (Tecnologias da Informação e Comunicação), ou continuarão a desempenhar um papel preponderante na influência da opinião da população? E, de que forma os novos meios de comunicação, como a Internet, serão capazes de recuperar a ideia de esfera pública? Conseguirão ser meios que proporcionem a apresentação de argumentos e fomento de ideias em prol do bem de uma comunidade, de um país?

## O Jornalismo e o Espaço Público.

Com a industrialização da imprensa surge a cultura standardizada, a rotina produtiva dos meios de comunicação, o domínio dos poderes editoriais, políticos e económicos. Com o aumento da industrialização da imprensa assiste-se a uma diminuição da participação do público na vida pública. Este é um mero receptor passivo da mensagem, que é “elaborada de acordo com o estilo e com a agenda de assuntos em cuja elaboração raramente participa, pelo menos de forma directa” (Correia, 1998).





Os meios de comunicação de massa, caracterizados pela homogeneização da mensagem, desvalorizam a componente crítica do público. Os jornalistas não dão lugar ao esclarecimento, à análise e ao confronto das razões, e quando tal existe acontece pela sedução e pelo jornalismo espectáculo.

Com os novos média, e sobretudo a Internet, o cidadão é cada vez mais o próprio jornalista. Tem a possibilidade de argumentar sobre o acontecimento, de acrescentar algo de novo ao assunto, sendo as TIC uma possibilidade de renascimento da esfera pública de Habermas. Os novos meios possibilitam o aparecimento da esfera pública porque retomam “a troca de opiniões, alimentada por uma racionalidade comunicativa” (Brittes, 2003).

Com a Internet, o cidadão é o produtor e o consumidor da informação, podendo mesmo recolhê-la junto da fonte, sem mediadores, entrando em discussão directa sobre a mesma, sem esta estar sujeita à selecção de informação e influências de terceiros.

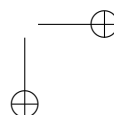
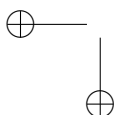
João Carlos Correia, da Universidade da Beira Interior, na sua comunicação acerca de Novo Jornalismo, CMC (comunicação mediada por computador) e Esfera Pública afirmou que a Esfera Pública surge sempre que é constituída uma “situação conversacional, na qual se juntam pessoas privadas para formar um público”. A polis grega foi precisamente o espaço onde isto aconteceu, onde houve pluralidade de ideias e de argumentos. Estará esta livre discussão de ideias e pluralidade de opiniões em crise?

## Crise no Espaço Público.

Este domínio dos poderes económicos e políticos sob os meios de comunicação social condiciona a discussão e pluralidade de ideias, veiculando um ponto de vista apenas sobre uma determinada temática.

Habermas, numa comunicação que realizou em Dresden, em 2006, sublinhou que a Esfera Pública carece de comportamentos deliberativos e é dominada por um tipo de comunicação mediada, faltando-lhe a interacção cara a cara entre os participantes activos desta esfera e uma troca igualitária de opiniões. Acerca da Internet e da possibilidade de ser um espaço livre de opinião, o teórico considera que os debates *on-line* tendem apenas a fragmentar a audiência de massas num grande número de públicos isolados, embora reconheça que a CMC permita uma maior liberdade de expressão, sobretudo nos regimes autoritários, que têm intenções de censurar e controlar a Opinião Pública.

Outro dos aspectos que ainda contribuiu para que a Internet não seja um espaço público de excelência, tal qual foi a *Polis* grega, reside no facto de ser um meio de comunicação, que ainda nos dias de hoje chega a uma ínfima parte da população mundial, apesar de estar em exponente expansão.



Muito embora tenha sido encarada como uma lufada de ar fresco para o ressurgimento da Espera Pública, a Internet é uma estrutura comunicacional que, a curto prazo, estará também ela dominada pelos mesmos grupos económicos que já dominam os meios de comunicação tradicionais. Apesar de este novo paradigma ser uma ameaça para os agentes políticos, habituados a deter o poder das comunicações e dos média, pode também ser uma janela de oportunidades, uma vez que proporciona uma ligação directa, sem qualquer mediação (Pinto, 2006).

Um grupo de investigadores galegos conseguiu provar isso mesmo ao analisar o motor de busca *Google*, mostrando que um cliente conseguia, através do SEM (Search Engine Marketing) posicionar determinada página no motor de busca. Ora, sendo os média já empresas, com as empresas publicitárias a condicionar os conteúdos, com grande maioria das fontes a serem institucionais, e tendo em conta a auto-censura dos jornalistas, devido a medo de represálias, parece claro que o mais banal assunto, sem o mínimo interesse informativo para a população pode ser manchete de um jornal ou abertura de qualquer noticiário nas rádios e televisões. Basta que por detrás estejam as pessoas *certas*.

## O Agendamento e a Espiral do Silêncio.

McCombs considera que o poder dos novos média em construírem a agenda de uma nação é enorme e constitui uma notável influência. Os média ao escolherem os temas que vão destacar estão a formar a agenda do público e será acerca dos temas escolhidos que incidirá o debate no espaço público, e estes estão na base da formação da Opinião Pública. (McCombs, 2000)

No entanto, o Agenda-Setting não se limita a este passo inicial. Os média também influenciam a forma como se entende e se percebe determinado assunto que é tratado como notícia. Não só colocam o assunto em agenda, como condicionam a forma como se pensa acerca do assunto e a forma como é debatido no espaço público.

O volume de exposição aos média também é preponderante para avaliar o efeito de agendamento. Quanto maior for esta exposição, mais facilmente os indivíduos serão influenciados na sua tomada de posição acerca de determinada temática.

Habermas pede uma maior participação dos cidadãos na esfera pública, o debate activo de ideias e conceitos que são lançados diariamente e descontextualizados na arena pública, mas como fazê-lo quando os próprios meios de comunicação não revelam hoje interesse por assuntos que não *vendam*. O cidadão vê-se na obrigação de discutir assuntos que fazem parte da agenda dos média, que são de importância para estes e/ou para os grandes grupos que os dominam. Os média, outrora vistos como impulsionadores do espaço público, são agora vistos como uma ameaça.

Noelle Neuman estuda também a formação da opinião, mas com base na Natureza Social do Homem. O indivíduo, perante um assunto moral e contraditório, tende





a tomar a posição da maioria, mesmo que a sua opinião seja contrária. E, fá-lo com medo de rejeição grupal, por temer objecções ou desdém por parte da maioria. Segundo a Teoria da Espiral do Silêncio, defendida por Neuman, o falar livremente de um determinado ponto de vista pode levar ainda mais ao isolamento da minoria. Os meios de comunicação podem influenciar, e muito, o processo de Espiral do Silêncio, quando perante uma questão moral tomam determinada posição e exercem influência no processo. (Neuman, 2004)

Apesar de o espaço público estar sujeito a todas estas limitações, Habermas considera que cada um dos membros que compõe a Esfera Pública detém, apesar de todos estes poderes e influências, a capacidade de seleccionar e contribuir para a mobilização de assuntos, factos e argumentos relevantes. Cada indivíduo tem a capacidade crítica de não se limitar à agenda e à mensagem difundida pelos média, que tem por base uma ideologia política, económica e social. Dada a realidade de que na actualidade seja difícil encontrar um espaço público que não esteja manipulado, ou sob uma qualquer influência, Habermas lança um desafio ao média, para que não sirvam apenas os interesses dos grandes grupos económicos, pois as suas mensagens podem ser “altamente desfasadas da realidade humana” (Cucurella, 2001).

## Líderes de Opinião.

Em 1994, Lazarsfeld, Berelson e Gaudet descobrem a noção de líderes de opinião e o fluxo de comunicação a dois níveis. Uma comunicação que é emitida pelos meios de comunicação social para os líderes de opinião, que depois de a analisarem e filtrarem a reenviam para a população em geral, no caso dos líderes cosmopolitas, ou para a comunidade em que se inserem, sendo estes líderes locais. Estes líderes de opinião são os cidadãos que têm um “grau máximo de interesse e de conhecimentos” (Wolf, 1995). Estes líderes são a parte da Opinião Pública que tenta influenciar o eleitorado (no contexto de uma campanha política). Para além desta comunicação a dois níveis (Two Step Flow), há ainda a ter em conta a cristalização de opiniões, quando uma opinião é formada com base na troca recíproca de informações, entre indivíduos que pertencem ao mesmo grupo.

Nas teorias da comunicação, os líderes de opinião surgem dentro da questão da Teoria dos Efeitos Limitados, tendo sido nesta altura que, mais do que analisar a relação causal directa da propaganda de massas e da manipulação da audiência, se tentou analisar a influência e as dinâmicas sociais no processo comunicativo.





## O Estudo.

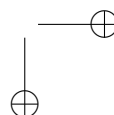
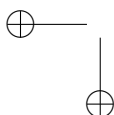
Dentro de todo este processo comunicacional, a quem cabe a influência? Para que se consiga uma aproximação àquilo que pode ser um exemplo de um maior poder de influência por parte de uma ou de outra força na formação da opinião do grande público, foi realizado um estudo, na cidade de Macedo de Cavaleiros (distrito de Bragança – Portugal). Seleccionou-se uma amostra de 30 pessoas, aleatoriamente, de ambos os sexos, e residentes na cidade mencionada, que depois da resposta a um questionário, dividido em três temas, catalogados por nacional (O Caso Alexandra, a “menina russa”), regional (Auto-Estrada Transmontana) e local (Futura Central de Camionagem de Macedo de Cavaleiros), foi submetida a diferentes estímulos. Os 30 elementos foram divididos em três grupos (A, B e C). O grupo B é exposto a várias notícias difundidas nos meios de comunicação nacionais, regionais e locais sobre os três assuntos, ao passo que o grupo A conta com a exposição à opinião de dois líderes de opinião locais: um vereador da oposição na autarquia de Macedo de Cavaleiros e líder de uma força política no concelho e candidato à Câmara de Macedo de Cavaleiros em Outubro de 2009, e ainda um deputado municipal, da força política contrária, carteiro de profissão e bombeiro voluntário na corporação local, fazendo ainda parte da Igreja Católica local, ou seja, um conjunto de instituições de ligação directa com a população.

A escolha destes dois elementos foi intencional, uma vez que os seus perfis encaixam naquilo que se pode designar como padrão de um líder de opinião local.

Uma semana depois, ambos os grupos são expostos às devidas influências, as opiniões e informações das notícias difundidas acerca desses assuntos (Grupo B) e às opiniões e informações veiculadas pelos líderes de opinião locais (Grupo A). Numa terceira fase, com a excepção do grupo C, que não foi sujeito a qualquer estímulo, sendo o nosso grupo de referência, são chamados a responder, mais uma vez, ao mesmo questionário. Apenas é acrescentada uma ligeira alteração no final. É perguntado aos elementos da amostra se mudaram de opinião e, em caso afirmativo, porque o fizeram.

## Influências.

No grupo A, que esteve sujeito aos estímulos dos líderes de opinião, nomeadamente com o visionamento da entrevista a ambos os líderes, numa primeira resposta ao inquérito colocado houve quem estivesse indeciso acerca da entrega de Alexandra à mãe biológica. A mudança de opinião não foi significativa, depois da exposição ao estímulo, mas denota-se uma mudança na fundamentação das respostas. Os inquiridos têm mais argumentos para justificar a sua opinião. Os que mudaram de opinião justificam-no com argumentos idênticos aos que foram dados pelos líderes de opi-



nião. Os líderes consideram que, apesar de haver uma necessidade em cumprir a lei, os sentimentos da criança não podem ser esquecidos, lembrando as consequências que a ida para a Rússia poderão trazer à criança. Daí que se observe que, na primeira fase, exista 80% dos inquiridos a concordar com a decisão do Tribunal de Guimarães em entregar a criança, ao passo que no segundo momento esta percentagem desce para os 70%, contra 20% dos que não concordam e 10% que estão indecisos.

Sobre o local onde Alexandra terá mais oportunidades na vida (Rússia ou Portugal), na 1ª fase 80% respondem Portugal e 20% Rússia, mas num segundo momento, depois do estímulo e dos argumentos dos líderes, mantêm-se os 80% de Portugal, mas a percentagem dos que defendiam a Rússia desce para 10%, uma vez que 10% dos inquiridos estão agora indecisos. Denote-se que os líderes sublinharam que será sempre em Portugal que Alexandra teria melhores oportunidades de vida.

Acerca da integração da criança na Rússia e perante a necessidade de escolherem um adjectivo que caracterizasse essa mesma integração: 60% consideraram que seria *Difícil*, no primeiro inquérito. Uma semana depois, 80% do grupo considerou o mesmo. Os líderes referiram que a adaptação à Rússia seria, pelo menos, diferente.

Em relação ao tema regional, nomeadamente a Auto-Estrada Transmontana, houve ligeira mudança de opinião na questão dos municípios abrangidos. Na primeira fase os inquiridos incidiram mais nos municípios de Macedo de Cavaleiros e Mirandela, mas no segundo momento, depois de ouvirem os líderes referir que a AE irá servir todos os municípios directa ou indirectamente, foram referidos muitos mais concelhos transmontanos.

Na questão colocada sobre se Bragança deixará definitivamente de ser o único distrito do país sem um quilómetro de AE, 60% considerava que sim no primeiro inquérito, enquanto no segundo já foram 80% a responder afirmativamente. As opiniões dos líderes foram tendencialmente positivas também.

A questão onde se manifesta uma maior mudança de opinião está no tema local (Central de Camionagem de Macedo de Cavaleiros). Apenas 10% dos inquiridos considerava a actual paragem como Suja, mas depois de visionadas as entrevistas dos líderes já 70% a consideravam assim, bem como 50% apresentaram outras justificações, enquanto no primeiro inquérito apenas 20% o fizeram. “Não há casas de banho, sítio para guardar um saco, nada”, foi a resposta dada por um dos líderes de opinião, que pode ter levado a esta larga mudança de opinião.

Na questão das razões porque não avançou o projecto de execução da central de camionagem, ninguém no primeiro inquérito havia mencionado a falta de financiamento, argumento indicado pelos dois líderes, e que aparece com 20% de respostas num segundo momento.

No grupo B, que esteve sujeito aos estímulos dos meios de comunicação nacionais, regionais e locais, consoante o tema em questão, verificaram-se também algumas alterações de opiniões e das respectivas fundamentações.

No caso Alexandra, não havia qualquer pessoa que concordasse com a decisão do Tribunal de Guimarães, mas na segunda fase já existe pelo menos um indeciso. Quanto às características da mãe biológica, havia um inquirido que a considerava trabalhadora, mas que deixou de o mencionar, depois de assistir às notícias que davam uma má imagem de Natália.

Depois de visionarem as notícias, 100% dos inquiridos consideram que seria em Portugal que Alexandra teria uma melhor integração e um melhor futuro e 100% consideram que será *Difícil* a sua adaptação à Rússia, quando no primeiro momento eram 80%.

No assunto regional, a maior expressividade de mudança de opinião aconteceu em relação à data de conclusão dos trabalhos da AE. No primeiro momento as respostas variavam entre as quatro datas à escolha e o não sabe ou não responde (2010:10%, 2011:20%, 2012:30%, 2013:20%, Não sabe: 20%), já no segundo inquérito, depois de todas as notícias avançarem com o final do ano de 2011 como data provável do fim das obras, 90% dos inquiridos indicou esta data. De referir ainda que os 20% que inicialmente não sabiam responder a esta questão o fizeram no segundo momento.

Em relação ao assunto local, na caracterização da paragem de autocarros destaca-se o aumento do número daqueles que referiram que é Suja (de 30 para 60%) e daqueles que disseram que é Pequena (de 80 para 90%). E porque não avançou ainda o projecto de execução da Central de Camionagem? Todas as notícias indicavam a falta de financiamento como a causa provável para o constante atraso da obra. Na análise aos inquéritos conclui-se que num primeiro instante apenas 10% referiram a falta de financiamento, contrapondo com os 30% do segundo instante.

## Conclusões.

A mudança de opinião pode ocorrer nas mais variadas situações, e mais do que uma vez, mas ocorre sobretudo quando há paralelamente uma mudança cultural do indivíduo. Contudo, em públicos alargados são reduzidas as opiniões que mudam apenas porque são refutadas, ou seja, perante a maioria, a minoria, que tem uma opinião contrária, vai simplesmente manter a sua opinião, e não tender para a norma. (Albig, 1939)

Uma mudança de opinião ocorre mais facilmente quando aos indivíduos são dados estímulos positivos sobre o assunto, em vez de negativos. Um líder político, como um Primeiro-ministro, por exemplo, tem um programa governamental e não uma política de negação, pois assim é mais fácil reunir o consenso da população. Existe uma aversão popular contra qualquer ideia pessimista. “Costuma ser verdade, excepto em pequenos períodos de crise” (Ibid, 1939).

Para medir esta mudança, William Albig sugere que se façam análises, como a ob-

servação participante, os testes de intervalo de tempo e com tratamento quantitativo, testes com estímulos controlados, ou ainda estudos quantitativos de opiniões.

Neste caso concreto, a possível mudança de opinião, influenciada pelos meios de comunicação e pelos líderes de opinião, foi testada com recurso a várias destas técnicas, uma vez que foram realizados testes com uma semana de intervalo de tempo entre si, os participantes no estudo foram sujeitos a estímulos controlados e a análise foi maioritariamente quantitativa, embora tenha sido dado valor à qualidade das respostas.

Constata-se, com este estudo, que tanto os meios de comunicação como os líderes de opinião influenciam a população.

Os resultados a que se chega demonstram que há mudança de opinião da primeira para a segunda fase do estudo, embora não de forma acentuada. A juntar às mudanças de opinião, é de salientar que haja também, por vezes, algumas mudanças no fundamento das opiniões, as respostas são mais completas num segundo momento.

No entanto, este estudo mostra-se inconclusivo no que respeita a saber quem exerce mais influência: meios de comunicação ou líderes de opinião. É impossível verificar se são os líderes de opinião quem melhor difunde a informação e agita a Opinião Pública, sendo possível apenas confirmar que estes a influenciam.

Não se pode identificar uma causalidade unívoca, e talvez nem mesmo com estudos mais aprofundados se conseguirá chegar a essa conclusão. O número de variáveis envolvidas é enorme, como as condições socioculturais dos elementos do estudo, as condições emocionais, o próprio facto de estarem a dar a sua opinião fora do seu contexto, fechados numa sala onde foram chamados a dar opinião sobre três temas. Há que ter em conta que as pessoas presentes no estudo já poderiam trazer a sua opinião influenciada por outros factores externos ao estudo.

O mesmo estudo, mas em versões posteriores, pode tentar que ambos os líderes tenham versões idênticas dos mesmos assuntos, pois neste caso os dois entrevistados nem sempre estiveram em sintonia de opiniões em relação aos três temas, não constituindo um agente forte de mudança, até porque eram de forças políticas contrárias e dois dos temas eram de natureza política. Ou seja, quantos mais líderes com a mesma opinião, provavelmente maior será a mudança de opinião.

Ainda dentro da análise dos resultados, mostra-se inconclusivo o facto de não se saber se há mais mudança de opinião numa determinada categoria de notícia do que noutra. Nos três assuntos (nacional, regional e local) houve mudanças de opinião.

A influência dos média e dos líderes de opinião é mais notada quando não existe uma opinião já formada. Quando o cidadão está sem uma posição tomada perante um determinado assunto é mais facilmente influenciado e levado a partilhar da mesma opinião que *mass media* ou líderes de opinião.

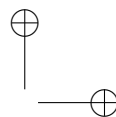
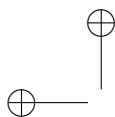
Denota-se uma maior influência em questões de menos desenvolvimento, mais directas, como o caso das datas, das características de uma pessoa ou do número de

municípios abrangidos pela AE, e neste caso até, possivelmente, uma maior influência dos meios de comunicação.

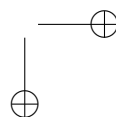
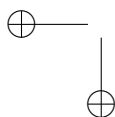
Outra questão importante é a subjectividade do investigador, que pode inclusive ter levado ao fenómeno de *Espiral do Silêncio* abordada anteriormente. O facto de ser jornalista num meio de comunicação regional, e muito embora tenha sido tentado o máximo rigor e ética nesta investigação, poderá ter levado ao silenciamento de algumas respostas, sobretudo das mais polémicas, receando alguma possível publicação, mesmo tendo sido assegurado os fins académicos da investigação no início do estudo.

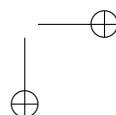
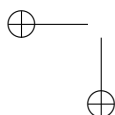
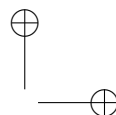
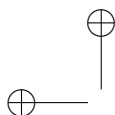
## Bibliografia

- ALBIG, William, *Public Opinion*, Nova York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939.
- ARENDT, Hannah, *A Condição Humana*, Lisboa, Relógio d'Água, 2001.
- BRITTES, Juçara, *Internet, Jornalismo e Esfera Pública: um estudo sobre o processo informativo do ciberespaço na formação de opinião*, São Paulo, Tese de Doutoramento em Ciências da Comunicação – Escola Superior de Comunicação e Artes da USP, 2003.
- CORREIA, João Carlos, *Jornalismo e Espaço Público*, Covilhã, Estudos de Comunicação da Universidade da Beira Interior, 1998.
- CUCURELLA, Margarita Baladares, *La Opinión Pública en Habermas*, Barcelona, Cila Boletines Electrónicos, 2001.
- HABERMAS, Jurguen, *Political Communication in Media Society – Does Democracy still enjoy na epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research*, Dresden (Alemanha), Comunicação na Convenção Annual da ICA, 2006.
- McCOMBS, Maxwell, *The Agenda-Setting Role of the Mass Media in the Shaping of Public Opinion*, Comunicação na Mass Media Economics, Londres, 2002.
- NEUMAN, Noelle, e PETERSON, Thomas, *The Spiral of Silence and the social nature of man in Handbook of Political Communication Research*, New Jersey, Mahwah, 2004.
- LIPPMANN, Walter, *Public Opinion*, Mineola, Dover Publications, 2004.
- PINTO, Ricardo, *Directa Já? A mudança do paradigma comunicativo e a eventual transição de uma democracia representativa para uma democracia participativa*, in *comunicação Política, Edição Especial, Caderno de Estudos Mediáticos 04*, Porto, Universidade Fernando Pessoa, 2006.

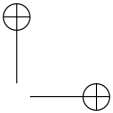
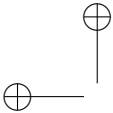


WOLF, Mauro, Teorias da Comunicação – Mass Media: contextos e paradigmas, Editorial Presença, Lisboa, 1995.









# Radiodifusão, Jornalismo e Esfera Pública. O debate em torno da criação da Empresa Brasil de Comunicação na imprensa

Edna Miola

## Resumo

Este trabalho articula as discussões a respeito do papel da imprensa na sociedade contemporânea com as expectativas normativas de um modelo de democracia que se funda na idéia de que o debate público racionalmente orientado deve legitimar as decisões políticas. A partir da contextualização do mercado de comunicação no país e o caso da criação da Empresa Brasil de Comunicação (supostamente o primeiro sistema nacional de radiodifusão pública instituída no país), avalia-se como se deu a cobertura do tema pelo jornal Folha de São Paulo durante os meses em que o projeto foi debatido e votado no Congresso Nacional (fevereiro e março de 2008). Da análise de 51 matérias jornalísticas, foi possível concluir que (1) a ênfase foi dada aos processos de produção da decisão, em detrimento das questões substantivas do projeto; (2) prevaleceram as perspectivas oficiais e a polarização dos posicionamentos de modo que (3) a apreensão do significado da política em elaboração pelos leitores do jornal analisado foi prejudicada por uma cobertura superficial e pouco plural.

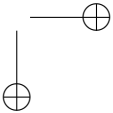
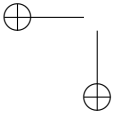
**Palavras-Chave.** Debate público; Jornalismo; Políticas de Comunicação; Empresa Brasil de Comunicação

## Introdução

Até a última década, o debate sobre a situação da comunicação social no Brasil nunca gozou de espaço privilegiado na agenda política, e tampouco as políticas regulatórias ganharam proeminência na agenda de visibilidade mediática. Nos últimos anos, porém, podem-se destacar alguns acontecimentos que, resultantes da ação do Estado ou da mobilização da sociedade, decididamente favoreceram a tematização pública da situação nacional das instituições da comunicação de massa.

Em uma consideração do desenvolvimento histórico do mercado da comunicação no país, é evidente o fato de que as iniciativas de regulação empreendidas (quando aconteceram) foram historicamente movidas pelos interesses comerciais das empre-

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices, 201-215*



sas privadas envolvidas no setor, e temperadas em muitos momentos com os interesses particulares de agentes políticos então no poder.

Desde 2003, especialmente a partir do segundo mandato do presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, é possível destacar algumas iniciativas que romperam com as tendências de inação do Estado, ainda que a prevalência dos interesses estritamente comerciais circunscritos às maiores empresas na área da comunicação de massa<sup>1</sup> tenha se mantido<sup>2</sup>.

Tendo isso em vista, a criação da Empresa Brasil de Comunicação (EBC) pode ser considerada um importante marco. Primeiramente, essa política se originou na articulação do governo com movimentos sociais e grupos de emissoras não-comerciais<sup>3</sup>, em uma rara ocasião em que a sociedade organizada foi convidada a elaborar um projeto para o setor. Em segundo lugar, diferentemente de outras propostas abandonadas em virtude da forte resistência enfrentada, neste caso, o governo lançou mão de diversas estratégias para sobrepujar as disposições das empresas privadas de comunicação e também reprimir a discordância dos partidos de oposição no Congresso Nacional. Esse conjunto de aspectos forneceu as condições necessárias para o tema *TV pública* angariar espaço nas arenas de debate e visibilidade pública dos *mass media*.

Para entender a visibilidade concedida à questão, é importante articular considerações a respeito tanto das propriedades da EBC como política pública, quanto da própria arena que é a imprensa no sistema da política mediática (GOMES, 2004). A propósito disso, questiona-se, o que se pode esperar dos principais espaços de visibilidade e debate público nas democracias contemporâneas quando os temas em tela são de interesse direto das próprias instituições, comprometendo, por exemplo, seu quinhão de influência. No intuito de encontrar pistas a esse respeito, o presente artigo discute as características da cobertura mediática em torno da criação da EBC, tendo em vista o conjunto de matérias publicadas pelo principal jornal brasileiro nos meses em que o tema esteve em debate e votação no Congresso Nacional.

Mas, antes, são levantadas algumas considerações a respeito da imprensa como importante espaço para as democracias de massa, uma vez que desempenha certas funções, tais como a oferta de informações e controvérsias necessárias à constituição da opinião pública. A seguir, outros aspectos que elucidam a questão da EBC

<sup>1</sup> Dentre os maiores grupos de comunicação do país estão: Organizações Globo, Grupo Sílvia Santos, Grupo Abril, Grupo Folha, Rede Record de Rádio e Televisão, Grupo RBS, Grupo Estado e Grupo Bandeirantes. Estes grupos detêm emissoras de TV abertas, segmentadas e por assinatura, produção audiovisual, cinema, gráficas, rádios, jornais e revistas, agências de notícias, empresas de distribuição, livros didáticos, portais de internet, provedores e acesso à web, gravadoras, empresas de pesquisas de mercado e opinião, empresa de *marketing*, além de outras atividades extra-mídia, tais como no setor financeiro, empreendimentos imobiliários, comércio de automóveis, comércio varejista (BIONDI; CHARÃO, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> É necessária a ressalva de que algumas dessas decisões foram acionadas pelas necessidades do próprio mercado, tal como a definição Sistema Brasileiro de TV Digital Terrestre, que já havia sido adiada pelo governo anterior.

<sup>3</sup> Através da realização do Fórum Nacional de TVs Públicas, entre 2006 e 2007.

são apresentados, de modo que, na última parte do trabalho, seja possível entender quais os temas e controvérsias mais proeminentes, quem são os atores associados aos principais argumentos e que enquadramentos foram promovidos pelo jornal Folha de S. Paulo para explicar quais perspectivas políticas estiveram em disputa naquele momento.

## Jornalismo e debate público

O desenvolvimento histórico do jornalismo consolidou um conjunto de princípios tendo em vista o reconhecimento da função social da atividade e de seus profissionais. Ao longo do tempo, valores e práticas foram sendo enfatizados, em muito influenciados por fatores políticos e econômicos, como é próprio das instituições da comunicação de massa (GOMES, 2004). Ao explicar as fases de desenvolvimento da imprensa norte-americana, Michael Schudson (2003) explicita como as empresas jornalísticas modificaram sua conduta de acordo com os interesses políticos, ora tomando posição, ora adotando a neutralidade, e com os interesses econômicos, ao “inventar” a objetividade como valor, por exemplo.

Mesmo ao lidar com o campo político, diferentes posturas foram adotadas pela imprensa ao longo do tempo. Quando se trata da interpretação do papel atual do jornalismo na sociedade contemporânea e sua relação com os temas de interesse público, algumas questões ainda são amplamente discutidas tais como: o estatuto da verdade e as interpretações da realidade oferecidas ao público, os processos de seleção e enquadramento que dão saliência àquilo que se julga mais relevante, a construção do acontecimento jornalístico, a existência de uma hierarquia que ordena os atores sociais na qualidade de fontes, o volume e a densidade das informações necessárias ao cultivo da opinião pública refletida, a constituição de um “mercado de ideias” através da pluralidade e o papel de vigilância quanto à esfera da decisão política (BUCCI, 2000; GAMSON; MODIGLIANI, 1989; GOMES, 2009; HAAS; STEINER, 2001; SCHUDSON, 1995; TRAQUINA, 2005; TUCHMAN, 2002).

No que tange às relações entre as instituições jornalísticas e o campo político, é interessante aqui ressaltar as percepções relativas a (1) a função informativa e de fomento à interpretação crítica dos fatos que depende da pluralidade e da profundidade oferecida à audiência e que tem por fim, colaborar no debate que dá contornos à opinião pública; (2) a função de cão de guarda, expondo o campo político ao escrutínio público e favorecendo os processos de *accountability* vertical. A estas funções notoriamente atribuídas ao jornalismo, soma-se (3) a preocupação adicional de discutir o próprio papel da imprensa, manifestas por pesquisadores que discutem o jornalismo público e também por aqueles que procuram o aprimoramento do campo através do questionamento da legitimidade social dos jornalistas em selecionar fatos, perspec-

tivas e erigir acontecimentos, na sua característica forma de construir uma realidade social.

Quando se propõe a análise do comportamento da imprensa frente a um fato social, uma política pública, ou uma interpretação das necessidades coletivas há que se lidar com a explicação das práticas condicionadas pelas rotinas produtivas, mas também à luz de um horizonte normativo. Neste caso, o que se tem em vista é um conjunto de pressupostos a respeito da deliberação pública como modelo de democracia (HABERMAS, 1992).

Em concordância com a observação de Maia (2008), admite-se, mesmo que com limitações, os *mass media* como ambiente apto a promover a deliberação pública, principalmente em decorrência de sua capacidade de amplificar as questões às quais dá visibilidade – uma função crucial para a formação racional da opinião pública e, consequentemente, a produção da decisão política legítima (FERREE et al., 2002; GASTIL, 2008; PAGE; TANNENBAUM, 1996).

Ao tratar da deliberação mediada, é interessante retomar as reflexões de Bernhard Peters (2008), que demanda interpretações, prescrições e ilustrações empíricas a sustentarem argumentos consistentes.

Mere factual statements or reports, just presented as such and without argumentative support, or reaction to anticipated or real questions, are not deliberation. So most of what is commonly called news or reports or information is not yet deliberation. Neither are unsupported judgements, evaluations or proposals, nor expressions of personal sentiments, feelings or experiences (p. 78-79).

Adicionalmente, de acordo com teóricos da deliberação pública, para que a comunicação de massa exerça seu papel democrático, é indispensável a oferta de uma pluralidade de enquadramentos e contra-enquadramentos<sup>4</sup>. Robert M. Entman, por exemplo, explica esse padrão normativo:

Os media deveriam dar informação suficientemente independente de forma a que os cidadãos pudessem construir os seus próprios enquadramentos alternativos sobre problemas e acontecimentos. Não lhes basta apresentar a informação de um modo fragmentado. O que os cidadãos precisam é de um enquadramento alternativo, construído por palavras e imagens significativas, com uma amplitude tal que se constitua como real alternativa à interpretação oficial (ENTMAN, 2004 apud BENNETT et al., 2005, p. 15).

<sup>4</sup> Há diversas versões para o conceito de *Media Framing*. De acordo com os propósitos e características empíricas da pesquisa, neste trabalho, julga-se adequada a perspectiva desenvolvida por Gamson e Modigliani (1989) que trata dos “pacotes interpretativos” (*media packages*). Na interpretação dos autores, “This frame typically implies a range of positions, rather than any single one, allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame. Finally, a package offers a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the core frame and positions in shorthand, making it possible to display the package as a whole with a deft metaphor, catch-phrase, or other symbolic device” (GAMSON; MODIGLIANI, 1989, p. 3).

Além do modo como os fatos, políticas e posicionamentos são enquadrados, é importante também considerar a estrutura de oportunidades de acesso à visibilidade mediática (MAIA, 2008). Em outras palavras, a plena realização do debate na esfera pública mediada depende da seleção das fontes realizada por jornalistas, que dá saliência a este ou aquele ator social. A pesquisa na área conclui que predominam no discurso jornalístico as versões oficiais e, quando há controvérsia, visões polarizadas das questões em pauta (BENNETT et al., 2005; SCHUDSON, 1995).

Em suma, ao observar a atuação da imprensa frente a uma proposta de política pública, questiona-se a quem é dada voz, que aspectos da ação política são debatidos, sob quais enquadramentos e, finalmente, se comportam elementos argumentativos que favoreçam a formação da vontade e da opinião.

## A EBC e a radiodifusão pública no Brasil

Uma série de disputas de interesses e medidas governamentais configurou, ao longo do tempo, o atual sistema de radiodifusão brasileiro. Uma mirada sobre os principais aspectos históricos do desenvolvimento do modelo de negócio explica o papel do Estado e a limitada intervenção da sociedade civil na definição das políticas setoriais (JAMBEIRO, 2002).

Pontualmente, destaca-se, primeiro, a iniciativa dos governantes de manter seu poder através da comunicação de massa<sup>5</sup>. Poder-se-ia dizer que a intervenção direta dos governos nas empresas de radiodifusão (a exemplo da censura estatal) foi atenuada com a redemocratização do país, na década de 1980, mas, a partir de então, outra prática perniciosa começou a vigorar: a propriedade de emissoras de radiodifusão por agentes políticos<sup>6</sup>. Esse aspecto deve ser levado em consideração quando da avaliação das decisões tomadas em âmbito legislativo.

Em segundo lugar, em acordo com um Estado marcado pelo patrimonialismo – como é o caso brasileiro – houve a primazia do setor comercial de radiodifusão que se manteve ao longo dos anos<sup>7</sup>, em detrimento da busca pela satisfação do interesse público na regulamentação das comunicações. A força do empresariado da comunicação se aprofundou nas últimas décadas, com a transformação das empresas em grandes conglomerados de comunicação e a prática ostensiva da propriedade cruzada.

Finalmente, pode-se perceber a escassa influência da esfera civil no que tange à produção de políticas para a comunicação em geral, mesmo com a multiplicação de

<sup>5</sup> Isso se deu especialmente no momento da regulamentação do rádio e se manteve quando da criação do Código Brasileiro de Telecomunicações, na década de 60.

<sup>6</sup> A propriedade de emissoras por políticos é vedada constitucionalmente, mas a prática ainda vigora através de subterfúgios legais (GOMES, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> A criação das emissoras educativas, em 1967, não reverteu esse quadro, e, de forma agravante, serviu para que as emissoras comerciais se dissociassem totalmente de suas obrigações com o interesse público através da programação educativa – que eram, até então, obrigadas a veicular (JAMBEIRO, 2002).

grupos de pressão com o objetivo de defender a democratização da comunicação de massa.

As expectativas de alterações nesse panorama prosperaram a partir do governo Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010), não sem motivo. Maciçamente apoiado por movimentos organizados da sociedade, juntamente com aquele governo foi eleito um projeto de intervenção na comunicação social<sup>8</sup>. A criação da Empresa Brasil de Comunicação, sustentada por uma série de debates prévios dos quais participaram membros do governo, representantes de emissoras de radiodifusão não-comercial e entidades mobilizadas em prol da regulamentação da comunicação, enquadra-se nesse projeto<sup>9</sup>.

## O Projeto de Lei de criação da EBC

O texto apresentado pelo Poder Executivo para a aprovação do Congresso Nacional abrangia um conjunto de dispositivos que alterariam de modo significativo o funcionamento das empresas públicas de radiodifusão a partir do posicionamento da TV Brasil (emissora de caráter público da EBC), em comparação com as demais emissoras educativas em funcionamento até então. Sobre esses pontos, que não sem razão representam as principais controvérsias sobre o projeto, discorre-se a seguir.

No lançamento, a Medida Provisória<sup>10</sup> trouxe em seu texto: a criação de uma nova empresa de comunicação (embora as discussões realizadas até então dessem conta de uma emissora de televisão pública) formada por duas empresas existentes sob administração do Poder Executivo (a ACERP e a RADIOBRAS) e vinculada à Secretaria de Comunicação da Presidência - SECOM; a definição dos objetivos e princípios do serviço de radiodifusão pública com os quais a nova empresa se comprometeria; o

<sup>8</sup> O Programa de Governo de Lula, apresentado na campanha eleitoral de 2002 previa, difusamente, que a democratização cultural brasileira só estaria completa se acompanhada da democratização dos meios de comunicação (COLIGAÇÃO..., 2002). O programa de governo de 2006 (quando da reeleição) continha a mesma menção à democratização da comunicação, mas ia além: trazia um tópico especial para a Comunicação onde o presidente/candidato se comprometia a “Construir um novo modelo institucional para as comunicações”, “Incentivar a criação de sistemas democráticos de comunicação, favorecendo a democratização da produção, da circulação e do acesso aos conteúdos pela população” e “Fortalecer a radiodifusão pública e comunitária, a inclusão digital, as produções regional e independente e a competição no setor” (COLIGAÇÃO..., 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Esses debates aconteceram entre 2006 e 2007 em torno do Fórum Nacional de TVs Públicas (I FÓRUM..., 2006).

<sup>10</sup> A respeito das Medidas Provisórias é importante dizer que se trata de um dispositivo constitucional que se destina a situações de relevância e urgência, mas que “se converteram em um procedimento ordinário utilizado para a implementação da agenda presidencial” (INÁCIO, 2007). As Medidas Provisórias têm caráter impositivo, pois, após um curto período de tramitação passam a “trancar a pauta” do Congresso, suspendendo todas as decisões até que seja votada. Por fim, “Trata-se de importante arma nas mãos do Executivo porque a promulgação de um decreto implica a imediata alteração do *status quo*” (LIMONGI; FIGUEIREDO, 1998) – elas podem entrar em vigor mesmo que ainda não tenham sido votadas.

modelo de gestão a ser aplicado (Diretoria Executiva, Conselho de Administração, Conselho Curador, este, composto por membros do governo e da sociedade indicados pelo Governo); e definição das origens das receitas que financiariam as emissoras (dotação orçamentária, prestação de serviços, publicidade institucional, patrocínios) (BRASIL, 2007).

As críticas ao projeto, inicialmente, concentraram-se em três pontos: (1) no método de criação da empresa (via Medida Provisória), levantada pela oposição no Congresso; (2) na vinculação da empresa à SECOM e à composição e indicação do Conselho de Administração e também do Conselho Curador, originada internamente e também vocalizada por grupos organizados da sociedade; e (3) na admissão de publicidade institucional, da parte das entidades associadas aos interesses das empresas privadas de comunicação (VALENTE, 2009).

Com o projeto no Congresso, foram apresentadas mais de uma centena de emendas. No relatório final, constavam dentre as mais relevantes as seguintes alterações: criação de uma Ouvidoria; instituição da Contribuição para o Fomento da Radiodifusão Pública (proveniente de 10% de um fundo já existente, pago pelas empresas que exploram os serviços de telecomunicações, que tem como destino o aperfeiçoamento dos mecanismos de fiscalização de suas atividades); delimitação da veiculação de publicidade institucional e apoio cultural; inclusão de percentual de produção regional e independente na grade de programação; e o fim da exclusividade dos direitos de transmissão de eventos esportivos de interesse nacional quando não houver pretensão da emissora detentora de veiculá-los em rede aberta.

## O debate e a votação do projeto da EBC na cobertura da Folha de S. Paulo

Para entender as características da cobertura do jornal Folha de S. Paulo foram analisadas todas as matérias publicadas nos meses de fevereiro e março de 2008<sup>11</sup> que fossem pertinentes ao tema da radiodifusão pública. A seleção por palavras-chave<sup>12</sup> somou 51 unidades de análise, assim distribuídas (Tabela 1):

Algumas considerações são necessárias a respeito do conjunto de matérias analisadas. O volume de unidades classificadas como notas (mais da metade do total) demonstra a falta de profundidade dedicada ao tema. Isso se agrava quando se observa que 16 das matérias são da mesma coluna (Painel, assinada por Renata Lo Prete), dedicada exatamente a comentar os bastidores do mundo político. Outras 6 notas sobre o tema foram publicadas por Daniel Castro, que escrevia sobre televisão.

<sup>11</sup> A votação na Câmara se deu no dia 26/02/2008 e em 12/03/2008 no Senado.

<sup>12</sup> As palavras-chave procuradas foram: Empresa Brasil de Comunicação, EBC, TV Brasil, televisão pública, TV pública, televisão educativa, TV educativa, radiodifusão pública, radiodifusão educativa.

Formatos	Números	Percentual
Notas	27	52,9%
Reportagens	12	23,5%
Cartas dos leitores	3	5,9%
Colunas fixas	3	5,9%
Editoriais	2	3,9%
Notícias	2	3,9%
Artigos de opinião	1	2,0%
Entrevistas	1	2,0%
Aspas / Citação destacada	0	0,0%

**Tabela 1:** Formatos das matérias.

Dentre as reportagens (12), apenas 5 tinham como tema principal assuntos diretamente relacionados com a EBC. As demais tratavam de temas como a votação do Orçamento e escândalos envolvendo o Poder Executivo<sup>13</sup> – elas, apenas periféricamente, referiam-se à EBC.

Adicionalmente, as matérias que de fato continham argumentação e justificativas aprofundadas e discutiam substancialmente a política em tela se reduziram a 6 e assim se distribuíram: uma coluna de opinião assinada por Jorge da Cunha Lima (presidente do Conselho Curador da TV Cultura) em defesa da criação da EBC; uma reportagem a respeito do dispositivo que cederia os direitos de exibição de eventos esportivos; uma coluna de Daniel Castro analisando o desempenho da TV Brasil desde que ela passou a funcionar (três meses antes); uma entrevista com o professor da Universidade de Londres e um dos produtores do documentário *Além do Cidadão Kane*, em visita ao Brasil, em que ele é convidado a dar sua opinião sobre a criação de uma TV pública no país; uma coluna do jornalista Nelson Motta, onde ele tece considerações sobre o caráter e a programação das emissoras públicas, relacionando o sucesso delas aos seus índices de audiência; e, finalmente, uma resposta de um leitor à referida coluna, opondo-se aos argumentos de Motta.

#### *Momento deliberativo*

Considerando as características do período em discussão, deve-se lembrar que o momento da produção da política é marcado pelo horizonte de uma decisão a ser tomada. Isso implica uma urgência (agravada pelo caráter da Medida Provisória) em definir os resultados das divergências, frequentemente lançando mão de estratégias

<sup>13</sup> Tais como os gastos executados por funcionários do governo por meio de cartões de crédito corporativos e a quebra do sigilo bancário de um funcionário particular do Ministro Antonio Palocci, relacionado com o escândalo conhecido por “Mensalão”.



não estritamente deliberativas<sup>14</sup>, tais como a barganha (neste caso a moeda de troca poderia ser os demais projetos do Executivo que viriam a ser votados pelo Congresso no mesmo período) e a própria decisão da maioria, por meio de votação antes do esgotamento do debate. Isso explica, pelo menos, dois aspectos da cobertura jornalística desse processo: a ênfase nas informações sobre os bastidores da política e a associação do tema da criação da EBC com temas aparentemente sem conexão, como a votação do Orçamento da União, instalação das Comissões Parlamentares de Inquérito e a regulação da edição de Medidas Provisórias (das 15 notícias em que a EBC era um tema secundário, 10 tinham esses temas como principais).

*A articulação dos enquadramentos*

Os condicionantes determinados pelo momento político em análise são demonstrados também na verificação dos principais pacotes interpretativos – *media packages* (GAMSON; MODIGLIANI, 1989) – apresentados pela Folha de S. Paulo: a maioria das matérias versava sobre o processo de produção da política (26 matérias) (Tabela 2). Isso quer dizer que, em uma generalização do material analisado, a EBC foi veículo para a discussão sobre o mérito das Medidas Provisórias lançadas pelo governo. Não quer dizer que esse aspecto não seja positivo na perspectiva deliberacionista, pois os processos também devem sofrer a análise e escrutínio da argumentação racional. Contudo, quando o enquadramento dos bastidores se sobressai perante os enquadramentos substantivos, há que se investigar mais profundamente o quanto a reflexividade sobre o processo colabora para a produção de melhores políticas públicas.

Substantivamente, os enquadramentos mais presentes foram aqueles que discutiam (a) o financiamento necessário à instalação e funcionamento da EBC, assim como as origens dos recursos (14 matérias); e (b) o conteúdo da programação da TV Brasil e das emissoras de Radiodifusão Pública (14 matérias). Esse último enquadramento poderia ser considerado o mais relevante em se tratando do tema em questão. Uma avaliação mais criteriosa das notícias demonstra, entretanto, que, quando se tratava do conteúdo da emissora a ser criada, predominou a preocupação com a transferência dos direitos de exibição das competições esportivas e não um debate sobre a natureza da programação e sua adequação aos princípios do serviço público. Isso é demonstrado quando se percebe que em 7 ocasiões o debate sobre a programação estava articulado com o enquadramento da regulamentação do sistema de radiodifusão (considerado na pesquisa como associado à exclusividade dos direitos de transmissões esportivas). O sucesso de audiência das emissoras também esteve relacionado com o enquadramento do conteúdo (2 matérias) mas, seguindo uma interpretação peculiar: na perspectiva oferecida pelo jornal, bons índices de audiência são resultado de bons investimentos financeiros, pois significam que a população “aprovou” a

<sup>14</sup> O deliberacionismo defenderia que tentativas de formar um consenso e acomodar as divergências através da argumentação deveriam preceder a decisão pela maioria (HABERMAS, 1992).

programação (2). Por outro lado, a associação entre o enquadramento do conteúdo e o enquadramento dos valores e princípios da radiodifusão pública, que pareceria mais afim com uma discussão a respeito do desempenho das emissoras, constam em 2 matérias.

Quando se trata dos enquadramentos mais associados com a política ideológica, tais como o papel do Estado e da sociedade na administração das emissoras de radiodifusão pública, é interessante notar que, de acordo com a interpretação do conjunto de matérias veiculadas, a participação da sociedade é definidora do caráter público dessas emissoras (9 matérias). Adicionalmente, fez-se presente em três momentos a preocupação com a interferência política do Poder Executivo na EBC, constatação consonante com as várias manifestações da oposição e também de outros atores envolvidos no processo de construção do projeto da empresa (VALENTE, 2009).

Ainda, no que tange os enquadramentos tornados disponíveis pela Folha de S. Paulo, a presença de pontos estruturais quanto a questões administrativas e técnicas (como a instalação de emissoras e transmissão do sinal da TV Brasil) e a sua valência sempre negativa (predominaram as críticas à ineficiência em instalar os transmissores necessários à emissão na cidade de São Paulo, por exemplo) revela que, enquanto dava destaque a críticas relacionadas ao método de criação da EBC, à incompatibilidade entre os investimentos necessários às emissoras públicas e os resultados produzidos, a Folha de S. Paulo também logrou demonstrar que a nova empresa de comunicação do governo já fracassava em uma de suas missões principais: ser um sistema de radiodifusão de abrangência nacional.

#### *Atores e fontes privilegiados*

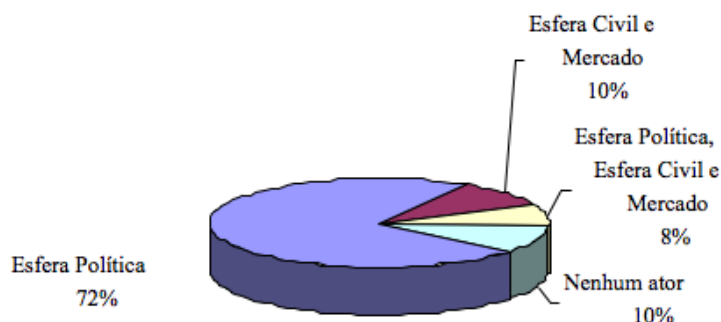
Uma análise dos atores a quem foi dada visibilidade confirma um achado de outras pesquisas na área da comunicação política: as cotas de visibilidade são distribuídas de forma desigual entre atores políticos e sociais e, principalmente, estão condicionadas às funções que os atores ocupam no centro do poder político (GOMES, 2008). Ilustrando, 37 matérias analisadas (ou 72,5%) citavam ou faziam menção apenas a atores da esfera política (Gráfico 1). Outras 4 apresentavam uma combinação entre atores políticos, sociais e do mercado e somente 5 matérias davam voz apenas a atores da esfera civil e/ou do campo empresarial da comunicação. Confirma-se, então, que a imprensa pode ser refratária às vozes da sociedade. Ainda de acordo com as conclusões de Gomes, os atores políticos que mais apareceram individualmente foram o Presidente do Senado (Garibaldi Alves, 4), o relator da proposta na Câmara (Walter Pinheiro, 4) o relator da proposta no Senado (Renato Casagrande, 3), o líder do governo no senado (Romero Jucá, 3), além de agentes do Estado ligados à EBC (Tereza Cruvinel, 5; José Roberto Garcez, 3).

Bennett e seus colegas constataram, ao investigar a cobertura da invasão do Iraque pela imprensa norte-americana, a predominância das versões oficiais e seus enquadramentos preferenciais no discurso jornalístico (BENNETT et al., 2005). Percebe-se,

Enquadramentos / Frequência	Investimentos financeiros na RP	Valores e Princípios da RP	Processo de produção da política	Assuntos administrativos da EBC/TV Brasil	Conteúdo da Programação da RP/TV Brasil	Interferência política do Governo nas emissoras de RP	Sucesso nos Índices de Audiência	Questões técnicas de transmissão e estrutura física	Regulamentação do Sistema de Radiodifusão	Participação da Sociedade na RP
Investimentos financeiros na RP	<b>14</b>	0	4	1	6	0	2	2	2	1
Valores e Princípios da RP	0	<b>3</b>	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	1
Processo de produção da política	4	1	<b>26</b>	0	3	1	0	2	2	2
Assuntos administrativos da EBC/TV Brasil	1	0	0	<b>3</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conteúdo da Programação da RP/TV Brasil	6	2	3	0	<b>14</b>	2	2	2	7	2
Interferência política do Governo nas emissoras de RP	0	2	1	0	2	<b>3</b>	0	0	1	1
Sucesso nos Índices de Audiência	2	0	0	0	2	0	<b>3</b>	1	0	0
Questões técnicas de transmissão e estrutura física	2	0	2	0	2	0	1	<b>9</b>	0	0
Regulamentação do Sistema de Radiodifusão	2	1	2	0	7	1	0	0	<b>7</b>	2
Participação da Sociedade na RP	1	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	2	<b>9</b>

**Tabela 2:** Associação dos Enquadramentos. **Observação:** Os enquadramentos estão dispostos na primeira coluna e, novamente, na primeira linha. As células a negrito realçam a presença de cada enquadramento no conjunto de matérias analisadas. As demais células representam o número de vezes em que cada argumento de uma linha apareceu associado a um argumento de uma coluna. Naturalmente, os valores se repetem quanto o par de argumentos é o mesmo.

também no caso aqui investigado, a presença maior dos atores situados no espectro político de apoio ao Poder Executivo: atores da oposição foram citados 17 vezes (em citações diretas, indiretas e menções, ou como objeto do discurso) enquanto atores



**Figura 1:** Atores citados nas matérias.

favoráveis ao governo foram citados 36 vezes<sup>15</sup>. Esse achado também corrobora com a ideia da polarização das divergências em torno da política, uma vez que a caracterização dos atores políticos se deu preferencialmente a partir de seu posicionamento no jogo político: ou “governistas” (ou aliados) ou “oposição”.

## Considerações Finais

De início este artigo logrou questionar se o comportamento da imprensa em relação a uma proposta de alteração na configuração do setor da radiodifusão seria comparável às típicas características levantadas por teóricos da comunicação política ou seria alterado levando em conta um possível conflito de interesses no desempenho das funções democráticas assumidas pelos media noticiosos.

De antemão é preciso considerar que a amostra em análise não é suficiente (em termos de período e em variedade de veículos) para generalizações. Mas aponta certos resultados quanto à promoção do debate público a respeito da criação da EBC pelo jornalismo.

De início, a variedade de enquadramentos encontrados no pequeno *corpus* analisado sugeria que diversos aspectos concernentes à política em execução estavam sendo apresentados, o que indicaria a pluralidade de interpretações disponíveis. Porém, quando se investigou a presença de argumentação racionalmente construída e justificada, evidenciou-se a falta de profundidade com que o tema foi tratado pela

<sup>15</sup> O total de aparições de atores (em todas as formas) foi de 84, distribuídas entre as 51 matérias. Algumas matérias não apresentavam ator algum, enquanto outras apresentavam diversos atores simultaneamente. O conjunto de atores de oposição ou de situação foi composto por partidos, parlamentares, bancadas e funcionários do Estado, quando a identificação da posição partidária era inequívoca.

Folha de S. Paulo. Dificilmente os cidadãos não envolvidos com o tema tenham tido a oportunidade de entender quais eram as alternativas em disputa a partir do jornal. O que foi reforçado, por outro lado, foi a visão de que a política se resume à disputas de poder abrigadas nos bastidores das arenas (para usar a ilustração de Ferree et al. 2002).

Adicionalmente, as seleções das fontes propiciaram o confronto de posições, mas, mais uma vez de acordo com apontamentos teóricos anteriores, as controvérsias foram construídas de modo a exaltar a polarização entre governistas e oposição em lugar de propiciar um *give and take* argumentativo. As citações aos atores políticos, aliás, predominaram nas matérias e, além destes, apenas os agentes do próprio campo da comunicação, a exemplo de comunicadores e representantes de empresas de radiodifusão, tiveram voz. Um único cidadão representou a toda a audiência em sua manifestação nas cartas dos leitores.

Há que se ter alguma cautela, porém, ao diagnosticar a ausência de discursos da esfera civil organizada. De início, foi apresentada a premissa de que a Empresa Brasil de Comunicação foi uma política construída a partir, entre outros aspectos, da colaboração da própria sociedade. Sendo assim, não seria de todo estranho se os discursos de políticos – especialmente os governistas – eventualmente coincidisse com os discursos característicos dos movimentos sociais pela democratização da comunicação, em um fenômeno que Dryzek e Niemeyer (2008) denominaram representação discursiva. Mas isso só poderia ser comprovado por uma análise mais ampla do que aquela pretendida por este trabalho.

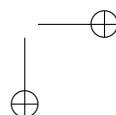
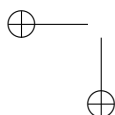
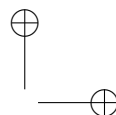
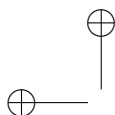
Finalmente, se as considerações se mostram pessimistas em relação à existência de uma deliberação mediada, segundo seus princípios normativos, é preciso ressaltar os limites do estudo aqui apresentado. Sem dúvida, uma avaliação da imprensa deverá abranger alguma variedade de veículos e se estender por um período que possibilite a apreensão de uma deliberação mediada em médio ou longo prazo. Esse desafio faz parte do projeto de pesquisa em andamento.

## Referências

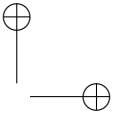
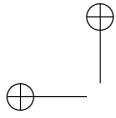
- BENNETT, L.; LAWRENCE, R. G.; LIVINGSTON, S. Evitar a palavra tortura. Os media norte-americanos e o enquadramento político de Abu Ghraib. *Media & Journalism*, (7) 2005, pp. 7-37.
- BIONDI, A.; CHARÃO, C. Terra de gigantes. *Revista ADUSP*, janeiro, 2008. p. 6-25.
- BRASIL. Decreto nº 6.246, de 24 de Outubro de 2007. Cria a Empresa Brasil de Comunicação-EBC, aprova seu Estatuto e dá outras providências. *Diário Oficial da União*. Brasília, Edição 206, 25 nov. 2007. Seção 1, p. 2-6.

- BUCCI, E. *Sobre ética e imprensa*. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2000.
- COLIGAÇÃO LULA PRESIDENTE. *Programa de Governo*. 2006.
- COLIGAÇÃO LULA PRESIDENTE. *Programa de Governo*. São Paulo, 2002.
- DRYZEK, J. S.; NIEMEYER, S. Discursive Representation. *American Political Science Review*, November 2008.
- FERREE, M. M.; GAMSON, W. A.; GERHARDS, J.; RUCHT, D. *Shaping abortion discourse: democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- GAMSON, W. A.; MODIGLIANI, A. Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: a constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, Chicago, v. 95, n. 1, p. 1-37, 1989.
- GASTIL, John. Mediated Deliberation and Public Opinion. IN: GASTIL, John. *Political Communication and Deliberation*. Sage Publications, 2008.
- GOMES, W. *Jornalismo, fatos e interesses*. Florianópolis, Insular, 2009.
- GOMES, W. *Transformações da Política na era da comunicação de massa*. São Paulo, Paulus, 2004.
- HAAS, T.; STEINER, L. Public journalism as a journalism of publics: Implications of the Habermas-Fraser debate for public journalism. *Journalism*, vol. 2(2), 2001. p. 123-147.
- HABERMAS, J. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992.
- I FÓRUM Nacional de TVs Públicas. *Diagnóstico do Campo Público de Televisão*. Brasília, Ministério da Cultura, 2006. 202 p. (Caderno de debates).
- INÁCIO, M. Estrutura e funcionamento da Câmara dos Deputados. Câmara dos Deputados. In: MELO, Carlos; SAÉZ, Manuel. *A Democracia Brasileira*. Editora UFMG, Belo Horizonte, 2007.
- JAMBEIRO, O. *A TV no Brasil do século XX*. Edufba, Salvador, 2002.
- LIMONGI, F.; FIGUEIREDO, A. Bases institucionais do presidencialismo de coalizão. *Lua Nova*, São Paulo, n. 44, 1998.
- PAGE, Benjamin I.; TANNENBAUM, Jason. Populistic Deliberation and Talk Radio. *Journal of Communication*, 46(2), Spring, 1996.

- PETERS, Bernhard. On Public Deliberation and Public Culture (1997). In: WESSLER, Hartmut; LEIBFRIED, Stephan; HURRELMANN, Achim; MARTENS, Kerstin; MAYER, Peter (Eds.) *Public deliberation and public culture: The writings of Bernhard Peters – 1993-2005*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- SCHUDSON, M. *The power of news*. Cambridge: University Press Harvard, 1995.
- SCHUDSON, M. *The sociology of news*. New York, W.W. Norton, 2003.
- TRAQUINA, N. *Teorias do Jornalismo*. Por que as notícias são como são. vol. 1. Florianópolis, Insular, 2005.
- TUCHMAN, G. As notícias como uma realidade construída. In: ESTEVES, J. P. (org.). *Comunicação e Sociedade*. Os efeitos sociais dos meios de comunicação de massa. Lisboa, Livros Horizonte, 2002. p. 91-104.
- VALENTE, J. *TV Pública no Brasil: A criação da TV Brasil e sua inserção no modo de regulação setorial da televisão brasileira*. Universidade de Brasília, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação. Dissertação (mestrado). 2009. 210 f.







## New Technologies and Deliberation: Internet as a virtual public sphere or a democratic utopia?

Ricardo Morais

### **Abstract.**

Contemporary democratic theories have sought alternatives to make democracy more participatory, approaching voters from government decisions. In this sense, deliberative democracy has emerged as an alternative, which emphasizes the ideal of democracy and give citizens the opportunity to deliberate rationally about the decisions that concern them.

Towards a better understanding of the democratic process, in which the ideal of deliberative democracy becomes relevant, the concept of Habermasian public sphere is highlighted as the expanded space from society, where citizens deliberate on the public issues.

At the same time, new technologies of communication and information have grown as resources that have the potential to strengthen democracy. Interactive and multifunctional, they offer a wealth and exchange of information, offering new possibilities for decentralized participation and connection between citizens and politicians.

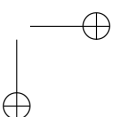
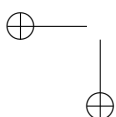
However, in much of the literature, it is common to overemphasize the technological dimensions and settle, deterministically, an association between the potential of new technologies and the revitalization of democratic institutions and practices.

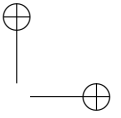
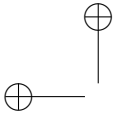
This article discusses whether new technologies of communication and information, and specially the Internet, can contribute effectively to strengthening democracy. We argue that the concept of public sphere need a review, perhaps a review that abandons the assumptions of Habermasian public sphere, because changes in modern society and the technical revolutions of recent decades have generated significant changes in the social field.

We also argue that Internet does not create a public sphere, because it lacks essential features like the debate argued with the use of reason, collective interests above individual abilities to understand and hear different voices, political engagement, among others.

In the other hand, opportunities offered by the network should be seen so associated with the motivations of social actors themselves and the procedures of communication between them (Maia, 2002, p. 65).

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 217-230





The paper explores first the model of deliberative democracy as a two track model. Secondly, it outlines the normative concept of the public sphere and its basis ideas, namely the rationality, reciprocity, equality and non-coercion, aspects that should dominate a space for public deliberation. The third part for discussion shows how the Internet couldn't fit into this concept of public sphere.

**Keywords:** deliberation; democracy; public sphere; Internet; Habermas.

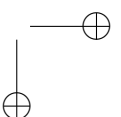
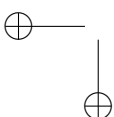
## Introduction.

Since the mid-90s, the topic of new media, and especially the Internet, was introduced in communication studies and politics, bringing with it great expectations regarding the renewal of the possibilities of democratic participation. Some authors have even argued that the new media technically recreated the possibilities of direct democracy. In this context, deliberative theorists begin to face the Internet associated with a number of possibilities to increase the quality and quantity of public deliberation and the public sphere online.

However, if it is true that the new media offer new opportunities for citizens' participation, particularly because they differ in very stark ways of previous media, we can not talk on the Internet as a public sphere or an instrument of democratization without first consider the characteristics of an area of public discussion, taking into account the ideals of deliberative democracy in the context of contemporary society. Thus, based on the idea of a deliberative democracy, in this paper we consider important conceptual challenges about the significance of the public sphere in the context of new media, but also the tensions over who participates and how this so-called new public sphere is linked to the ideals of a deliberative democracy. This particular research thus attempt to determine whether the Internet meets Habermas' criteria of a public sphere and whether our notion of public sphere should be reshaped with the introduction of new communication technologies.

## The emergence of Deliberative Democracy in Democratic Theory.

The decline of political participation, a loss of voter confidence in representative institutions and a participatory apathy revealed in the lack of interest by citizens in public affairs (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Putman, 2000), are some of the main problems which have raised, in the last decades, a shift in political studies and particularly in studies on democracy. In this context, all over the world there have been





further discussions about how to revitalize democracy, because there is growing concern that representative democracy is undergoing a crisis (Arteton, 1987; Cohen e Arato, 1992; Giddens, 1994; Manin, 1997; Coleman e Gotze, 2001; 2005; Castells, 1997), focused mainly in relations between the civil sphere and the sphere of political representatives. In fact, we believe that there is indeed a “crisis”, not of the representative democracy, but only one of its values: the participation.

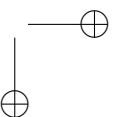
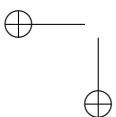
It is in this context that we can understand the emergence of the theory of democratic deliberation “as one cure to address this malaise of modern democracy” (e.g., Barber, 1984; Fishkin, 1991; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). The deliberative conception of democracy has been developed in opposition, or at least as an alternative, to the dominant conceptions of democracy based on an elitist epistemological model, in which individual preferences are aggregated through the voting mechanism, the ultimate expression that allows citizens’ participation (Schumpeter, 1984).

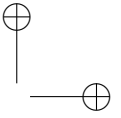
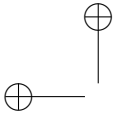
Thus, deliberative democracy has been highlighted as a model which implies that political decision-making is or should be “talk-centric” rather than “vote-centric” (Bohman and Rehg, 1997; Chambers, 1999). This means that deliberative democracy refers to the importance of restoring participation in forums of civil society with space for citizens’ involvement on issues that concern them and their communities (Bohman, 1996; Cohen, 1997), i.e., is a normative political theory that assumes rational communicative behavior and voluntary participation in public affairs on the part of citizens.

“A form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives) justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching decisions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future” (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004, p. 7).

In the sense adopted here, deliberation is not seen as decision-making that takes place at a given time, but as the social process of offer and examine arguments, involving two or more persons to seek cooperative solutions in situations of conflict or divergence. Is a process that requires a joint activity in which actors listen to each other, reasonably justify their positions, show mutual respect, and are willing to re-evaluate and eventually revise their initial preferences through a process of discourse about competing validity claims (Habermas, 1997; Chambers, 1995, 1999; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996).

However, the roots of this conception of democracy are not recent. From Aristotle to Burke, through Rousseau and Mill, there are many classical figures in the history of political ideas that the various deliberative democratic trends suggest as sources of inspiration (Silva, 2004). But, while all of them advocate the deliberative method, in a greater or lesser degree, they were far from being proponents of a form of deliberative democracy with the features that we have today. Indeed, the first time that the notion





of deliberation is articulated in the context of a modern conception of democracy only happens in the first half of the twentieth century, in works such as *The Public and Its Problems* by John Dewey (1927).

But it is especially in recent decades, from the work of Joseph Bessette (1980), that the term “deliberative democracy” gained a prominent place in democratic political theory and in academic studies. In general, deliberative democracy distinguishes itself from other democratic theories by the assumptions that are at its base: its insistence on the notion of “rational debate” as a political procedure, rather than the notion of “compromise between divergent interests”; instead of a private act such as voting, deliberative democracy bet a public act as a political act par excellence: the free and public exchange of arguments.

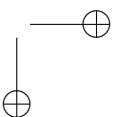
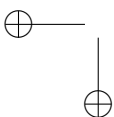
In this sense, Joshua Cohen and Jürgen Habermas can be considered the theorists who fixed the foundations of modern deliberative democracy (Silveirinha, 2005). The Habermasian perspective of deliberative democracy lies in the tension between the republican model and the liberal model. The German philosopher indicates a model of democracy that, on the one hand, does not abdicate the strong interaction and discourse between citizens and representatives to the formation of opinion and, secondly, that recognize rights, freedoms and individual claims. In this context, deliberative democrats, influenced by Habermas, have long emphasized the public sphere as perhaps the most important space for deliberation (Bohman, 1996; Dryzek, 1990). Thus, the deliberative nature of democracy underscores the fundamental idea of public sphere, whose emphasis is on the need of participation from civil society in the decision-making process.

In this framework, the concept of public sphere as the locus of the debate appears to be central. The purpose of the next part in this paper is just exploring the concept of public sphere and its implications for democratic theory, specifically to theories of deliberative democracy. We will also pay particular attention to Habermas's formulations, especially the discussions around the concept of public sphere, which has been suffering throughout their works an ongoing review.

## **The concept of public sphere and its implications for democratic theory.**

In his classic work, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962 [1989]), Jürgen Habermas introduces the concept of public sphere as central to understanding the pillars of modern democracy. The author describes, in an historical perspective, the rise of a group of citizens who gathered with the purpose of discussing state affairs and issues of common interest.

“Gathering in the salons and cafeterias of the eighteenth century, and disseminating



their ideas through political pamphlets and the small press, the bourgeois formed a public which, although deprived of power to govern, had the capacity to criticize and formulate recommendations to guide the exercise of political power” (Maia, 2007, p. 71).

At this point, the public sphere was configured as a defense mechanism (Gomes, 2008) of the bourgeoisie in relation to the state, with the primary aim of promoting discussion on matters of common concern. The work of Habermas is still considered the foundation of contemporary public sphere theories, and most theorists cite it when discussing their own theories.

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor (Habermas, 1989, p. 27).

In his historical analysis, Habermas points out three so-called “institutional criteria” as preconditions for the emergence of the new public sphere: the disregard of status in this space; public discussions on topics and issues that hitherto had not been discussed, ensuring that there is a domain of common concern; and inclusivity or accessibility, which means that everyone had to be able to participate.

This notion of public sphere, as an open forum for debate among a community of citizens with equal political status, raised, however, many problems and a considerable number of critics, with the core criticism directed towards the above stated “institutional criteria”. Feminists as Mary Ryan (1991), Marion Fleming (1993) and Nancy Fraser (1993) among others, began to accuse Habermas of have idealized a bourgeois public sphere that outlines a scenario that does not take into account the mechanisms of exclusion, material inequalities, the restrictions of gender and the class division. Fraser argues that the bourgeois public sphere was in fact constituted by a “number of significant exclusions” discriminating women and lower social strata of society. Also Jane Mansbridge, in its investigation revisiting Habermas’ historical description of the public sphere, notes several relevant ways in which deliberation can serve as a mask for dominant groups in society and to the disadvantage of subordinates. Fraser also notes the difficulty in defining what matters generally conceived as private that become public and of “common concern”.

But beyond the feminist criticism, other authors have also criticized the fact that the German sociologist focuses their theory in a period of limited democracy and liberal practices, features of the nineteenth century.

In the second part of the Structural Transformation, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Habermas argues that bourgeois public sphere goes through a series of significant changes, with private interests gained political roles and control the state and media. The state

will thus play a greater role in the private domain, thereby hindering the division, hitherto clear, between State and civil society. As the public sphere declined, citizens were gradually reduced to passive clients unconcerned to issues of the public<sup>1</sup>.

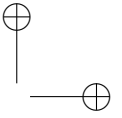
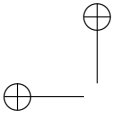
The limitations of the idealized public sphere in the nineteenth century have contributed to the various reformulations that the concept of public sphere has suffered, particularly given the complex and pluralistic societies. Habermas takes up the idea of public sphere, focusing this time not to analyze the ideological origins and history of the concept, but in considering how this sphere could function as a mean of legitimization of political power, a sphere of mediation between the State and private interests. In other words, Habermas wanted to reflect on the possibility of the discussions that took place in the public sphere legitimize the political decisions. The idea of a public sphere as a locus of discussion would thus not be understood as an institution, or as a place, because it refers to citizens' communication uses, particularly with regard to the argumentative exchange.

In this way, Habermas focuses on the discourse ethics, which are constituted by a set of universalistic and practical guidelines enabling to overcome a process of open and reflexive discourse. "Legitimate decision does not represent the will of all, but is one that results from deliberation of all" (Manin, 1987, p. 352). He expresses unambiguous conditions for reaching universal norms through discourse, i.e., in the public sphere one must be able to express his opinion freely and justify it rationally, one must have free access to the public sphere, there must not be a hierarchy present, and those in the public sphere must have equal footing in their participation.

These procedural rules are in Habermasian terminology commonly known as the criteria of the ideal speech situation. "Everyone with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse, to question any assertion whatever, to express his attitudes, desires, and needs. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in" (Habermas, 1990, p. 89)

These criteria of the ideal speech situation aim to reflect about those weaknesses who were diagnosed in bourgeois public sphere, including issues related to dominance of some groups, exclusion and definition of common concern. However, these criteria are a set of ideals, which is no guarantee of their applicability. Thus, not without reason that this work wants to explore how new technologies of communication and information, and specially Internet, which have grown as resources that have the potential to strengthen democracy, can effectively constitute as a virtual public sphere, tanking into account Habermas' strict criteria.

<sup>1</sup> This historical transformation is firmly grounded in the Frankfurt School's (Horkheimer and Adorno) analysis of the culture industry, in which giant corporations take over the public sphere and transform it from a sphere of rational debate into one of manipulative consumption and passivity. Public opinion shifts from rational consensus emerging from debate, discussion, and reflection to the manufactured opinion of polls or media experts.



## **From Deliberative Democracy to Communicative Action: the possibilities of the Internet.**

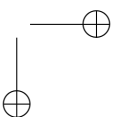
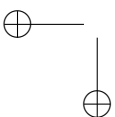
As we seen before, deliberative democracy defining as the “(...) democratic association in which the justification of the terms and conditions of association proceeds through public argument and reasoning among equal citizens” (Cohen in Bohman and Rehg, 1997, p. 72) has its basis in a fundamental notion of public sphere directly connected with the discourse ethics, where the ideal speech situation in which “every subject with the competence to speak and act” means that is to be allowed access to the public discourse, that is, without being exposed to any type of coercion. To Habermas (1996, 307), public discourse is formed and articulated not in one singular discourse, but it results from a network of publics having fluid temporal, social, and substantive boundaries, which are securely embedded within a freedom of speech and association.

In this sense, Habermas thereby follows the model derived by the sociologist Bernard Peters (1993), in which the political power-circuit follows a centre periphery structure, where the centre is constituted of formal political institutions that have direct influence on collectively decisions, and the periphery encompasses the multitude of publics that stand in direct, or indirect, relation to the centre. Thus, to be legitimate, decisions “must be steered by communication flows that start at the periphery and pass through the sluices of democratic and constitutional procedures situated at the entrance to the parliamentary complex or the courts...” (Habermas, 1996, p. 356).

The media plays, in this context, an obviously crucial role in explicitly articulating the public voice from the periphery (here understood as the public sphere) and the centre, stimulating further public deliberation on issues of civic interest. “Expectations to peripheral networks are directed at the capacity to perceive, interpret and present society-wide problems in a way that is both attention catching and innovative” (Habermas, 1996, p. 358).

These expectations gained, accordingly to many researchers, a new ground with new media, and especially with Internet, changing the traditional “centre-periphery” model through those who are appointed as its main potential.

Firstly, its global coverage and penetration can contributes to an increased ability of people to engage in public discourse. Until then, there were cases in which certain issues were not of interest in local or national context and because there was lack of interested. The Internet potentially increases the probability of finding not only spaces dedicated to issues in virtual spaces, but also interest from other people about them. From this point of view, any subject may virtually anywhere be articulated as one of “common concern”. Its global coverage also provides opportunities for minority voices, or excluded, voices not normally heard because they belong to groups, classes, people who are socially marginalized in the mainstream of communication.



Secondly, Internet can lead to the creation of a certain anonymity of its users, once they may speak out more freely on controversial issues, without fearing, intimidation or coercion. Thus promotes freedom of speech and freedom of association, and allows for more equal conditions for participation in the debate since the inequalities (class, gender, rhetorical skill of the participants) have certain effacement (Barglow, 1994; Reingold, 2000)<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, the asynchronous nature of virtual communication modes changing allows the users to choose when they want to participate, without duration or an hour, once they can read a contribution at one moment and submit a posting or a comment later. Moreover, there is no need for physical presence of the interlocutors

The asynchronous nature also fits the necessary conditions of rational discourse in the exchange, it can be said that the network environment is ripe for this kind of debate, since it tends to be based on a dialogic activity. There may be a constant exchange of papers and speakers. The dialogue partners can question and enter an opinion and express their own wishes and needs. No participant in the debate can arbitrarily shut down the process of interpretation and evaluation of comprehensive views of partners.

Overcoming the limitations of space and time, “everyone can communicate with any other individual, not just the city, region or state, but lately from anywhere in the world. With the barriers of time and space eliminated, a dialogue genuine online is possible between any number of individuals who wants exchange ideas” (Barnett, 1997, p. 194).

It is easy to see that the characteristics of the Internet represent a change from the previous media and an apparently more personalized communication, with a greater potential for interactivity, allowing a new relationship between individuals and communities, and between them and politics. Furthermore, new media in general, and Internet in particular, seems to meet all basic requirements of Habermas's normative theory about the democratic public sphere: it is a universal way, anti-hierarchical, complex and demanding. Because it offers universal access, non-coercive communication, freedom of expression, unrestricted agenda, participation outside of traditional political institutions and because it generates public opinion through processes of discussion, the Internet seems the most ideal situation of communication (Buchsteiner, 1997, p. 251). In many regards, the Internet seems to approximate and facilitate Habermas' institutional criteria better than the bourgeois public sphere. But, one may ask, are the virtual spaces of the Internet really as free as they seem?

<sup>2</sup> This should be considered in context of Habermas' institutional criteria on inclusivity and disregard of status.





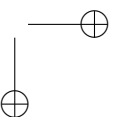
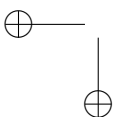
## Internet as a public sphere?

The notion of public sphere, in the context of a model of deliberative democracy implies, as we saw, a discussion space lined by inclusion, equality, communicative rationality and non-coercion. In this regard, Internet seems to meet all these requirements, providing a range of possibilities to a more democratic access, non-coercive communication and freedom of expression. Thus, the literature on the Internet and participation continues by presenting large lists of democratic gains of the new media. However, these theories quickly began to overemphasize the technological dimensions and establish, deterministically, an association between the potential of new technologies and the revitalization of democratic institutions and practices, which has contributed to the emergence of a number of studies that show a set of constraints and deficits on the Internet, in terms of its contribution to modern democracy.

First and foremost, concerns arise with the resources constraints, namely access to the Internet that is generally associated with the term “digital divide” (Norris, 2001). This understanding stresses the unequal distribution of “digital infrastructures”, strongly correlated with class and status, an argument which states that, at least at this level, it seems to reflect and reinforce inequality, rather than overcome (Wilhelm, 1999, 2000; Milner, 1999; Tsagarousianou, 1998). The so-called “digital divide” which encompasses the material access, language, knowledge (to use relevant communication software) and attitude to lead with technology (that is, the perception of not being capable to understand or adapt to the technology at hand). Thus, revisiting the standards of the ideal speech situation, specifically the first principle, which states that “everyone with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in the discourse”, we immediately realize that access is not universal. On the other hand, the issue of participation is not simply about the possibilities of access to technology. Participation also raises the issue with the discursive formation of will, i.e., the existence of a political culture conducive to the development of discursive potential (Maia, 2008, p. 285). Thus, the broader access to technology does not guarantee per se, an increased interest in public debate on issues. Motivation, interest and availability of the citizens to participate in the debates are crucial aspects. This means that opportunities offered by the network should be seen so associated with the motivations of social actors themselves and the procedures of communication between them (Maia, 2002, p. 65)<sup>3</sup>.

On the other hand, social divides and group polarization is common on the Internet and social divides are created by the web's ability to personalize content. The web is a place that is quite vulnerable to social fragmentation because the more easily

<sup>3</sup> “Recent studies have shown that the main obstacles to the achievement of the determination, which presupposes a discursive resolution of problems affecting the common interest, usually stem from a form of political apathy, not obstacles to freedom of expression or communication” (Maia, 2008, p. 285).



people receive information, the more they are interested only in what they are already interested in (Sunstein, 2001). Therefore, the group polarization is more likely and more extreme on the web than anywhere else and this is damaging to a democracy because mutual understanding becomes more difficult when people do not listen to others who have different or opposing views (Soe, 2004).

In this sense, taking into account the conditions for the existence of a “critical-rational discussion”, it takes more than a plurality of voices joined in the same space, but instead requires partners to build, in a coordinated and cooperative manner, a shared understanding on a common matter. People should express what they have in mind, should hear what others have to say and respond to questions and inquiries. This, in turn, requires an attitude of mutual respect. Wilhelm (1999; 2000), Hill and Hughes (1998), Dahlberg (2001), between other, through empirical research, specifically sought to examine whether there is the possibility of a debate with this condition in the space of online discussion, and concluded that most participants express their own opinion, not having a debate itself. Thus, Internet and other new media facilitate access to information, may allow the expression of different voices, but do not determine the procedure for inter-communication from the point of view of critical-rational reflection (Davis, 2005; Maia, 2002). It is unrealistic to expect that citizens are fully prepared and ready to rationally specify their own needs (Benhabib, 1996, Gutmann and Thompson, 1996).

Another aspect seen as a potential of the Internet, may also be seen as problematic, taking into account the characteristics of the public sphere. From the perspective of the debate, the anonymity first may give rise to a new reinvigorated possibility in which “occupation, education and social status (...) lose significance, bringing pure exchange of arguments to the fore” (Jensen, 2003, p. 351). However, anonymity is also associated with negative aspects, once contrary to expectations, “endless fruitless dialogues were characterized by irresponsibility, hate speech and decline of debate culture” (Jensen, 2003, p. 358).

With central theoretical foundations of Deliberative Democracy established, and the most fundamental Habermasian concepts in place, we discuss the possibilities of the new media in relation to democratic deliberation, but we also have saw a number of limitations of this medium, especially given that those are the ideal conditions for the existence of an area of public debate. The particular model of argumentation, as presented in the ideal speech situation of Habermas, are never fully realized in the real world because they have numerous and inevitable limitations as we saw. Thus, if the ideal speech should be seen only as regulative principle, and it is wrong to adopt this model in a very literal understanding of the dynamics of public debate, then, the Internet itself, while does have democratizing potential, it often fails as a public sphere in practice.

Is in this context that we argue, that Internet’ potential for serving as a public



sphere should lead us to the need to rethink their stance of how they look at the communicative breakthroughs of the Internet and the classic model of the public sphere theory. Rather than negate the Internet as a public sphere entirely, we should understand that the Internet is reinventing a public sphere different from the one Habermas envisioned.

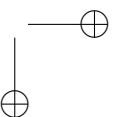
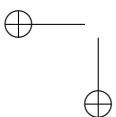
### **Rethinking the public sphere in the context of the Internet and Democratic Deliberation.**

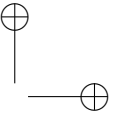
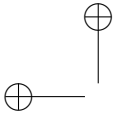
In the last years, while some scholars agree there can never truly be one virtual public sphere, according to Habermas' criteria, more and more scholars are beginning to rethink new criteria for determine what constitutes the public sphere. These reflections are due, largely, to the emergence of the Internet and how it has transformed Habermas' original criteria.

Dahlberg (2007), as Tranz, argues that rather than discard the public sphere, we have to introduce another public sphere understanding. The old concept of the public sphere, focused on Habermas, as we highlight in the beginning of this work, no longer works, especially if we consider the changes in modern society and the technical revolutions of recent decades that have generated significant changes in the social field. There is no longer a public sphere as conceived and defined by Habermas, in which equality was the essence and objectives and demands were common (Poster, 2001; Maia, 2002, 2006). The mutual agreement among discourse in the public sphere, that for some, leads to peaceful democratic deliberation, can simply means a repetition of the same voices.

On the other hand, the virtual spaces are programmed and conditioned by a control system, what means that there can be no assurance, that collective decisions or agreement represent the will of the masses. Furthermore, there are considered public spaces to discuss issues of interest to the participants, but not necessarily public or collective issues. Coming to a virtual public sphere, a space dedicated to communication in their public sense, in which all are able and have critical resources, economic, educational and technological means to participate is a utopia, an idealism. Even the birthplace of democracy has given voices to all needs, nor a society increasingly focused on capital may reach an egalitarian public sphere, universal and non-coercive.

Having said that, we want to highlight, in the context of this rethinking of new criteria for determine what constitutes the new public sphere, two main aspects. First, we must make it clear the need to preserve that space for the communication and public deliberation as an essential condition for strengthening democracy and interpersonal relationships. However, we can no longer talk of a public space given a set of ideal criteria, which we know in advance that we will not find. It takes more empi-

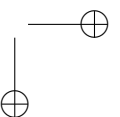
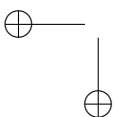




rical study on the actual discussions that take place in various spheres of the Internet, trying to identify the existence of a process of interaction between different users. Basically, this is about starting from the experiences that take place in the reality (in this context in the virtual spaces) and then construct a notion of a space of public dialogue, and not trying to analyze the reality through predetermined normative criteria. Secondly, it is certainly not the Internet that can solve the problems of our democracy, nor any technology that can guarantee the conditions for a public discussion and a perfect deliberative process. None of this will happen without an active engagement of citizens. For the existence of a public sphere, the actions are essential, the interactions, exchanges of ideas and experiences. Internet alone does not transform the citizen, neither endorse nor promote critical thinking, rational argumentation, or a fruitful debate. Although places with real potential the virtual spaces are no more than simulations arenas of freedom within a limited space of the operating parameters. The network creates an imaginary effect suggests that the reality does not exist outside the boundaries imposed by artificial parameters. But that reality exists, and thinking in a virtual public sphere that begins and ends in virtuality, and never goes against reality, trying to contribute effectively to the process of decision making can be a signal that we must realize a balance of power for the digital age: between the technology and the real decision making process in the real world.

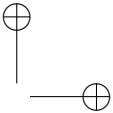
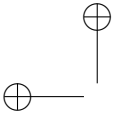
## Bibliographical references

- BARBER, Benjamin, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.
- BENHABIB, Seyla (org.), *Democracy and difference: contesting the boundaries of the political*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996.
- BOHMAN, James, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity and Democracy*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996.
- BOHMAN, James, *Expanding dialogue: The Internet, the public sphere and prospects for transnational democracy*, *The Sociological Review*, 52(1), pp. 131-155, 2004.
- BOHMAN, James & REHG, William (eds.), *Deliberative democracy: essays on reason and politics*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1997.
- CALHOUN, Craig, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, MA and London, The MIT Press, 1992.
- CHAMBERS, Simone, *Reasonable Democracy: Jürgen Habermas and the Politics of Discourse*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1996.



- COHEN, Joshua & ARATO, Andrew, *Civil Society and political theory*, Massachusetts, MIT, 1992.
- COHEN, Joshua, *Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy* in BOHMAN & REHG, William (Eds.), *Deliberative Democracy*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997.
- DAHLBERG, Lincoln, The Internet, deliberative democracy, and power: Radicalizing the public sphere, *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 3(1), 47- 64, 2007.
- DAVIS, Richard, *Politics Online: Blogs, Chatrooms, and Discussion Groups in American Democracy*, London, Routledge, 2005.
- DELLI CARPINI, Michael & KEETER, Scott, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.
- DEWEY, John, *The Public and Its Problems*, New York, Holt, 1927.
- FISHKIN, James, *Democracy and Deliberation: New Directions in Democratic Reform*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991.
- FRASER, Nancy, *Rethinking the Public Sphere* in CALHOUN, Craig, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.
- GOMES, Wilson, *Esfera Pública Política e Comunicação em Mudança Estrutural da Esfera Pública* in GOMES, Wilson & MAIA, Rousiley. (Org.). *Comunicação e democracia: problemas e perspectivas*, São Paulo: Paulus, pp. 29-68, 2008.
- GUTMANN, A & THOMPSON, Dennis, *Democracy and Disagreement*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- GUTMANN, A & THOMPSON, Dennis, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *Mudança Estrutural da Esfera Pública*. Rio de Janeiro, Tempo Brasileiro, 1984.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol.1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1984.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, Três Modelos Normativos de Democracia, *Lua Nova, Revista de Cultura e Política*, 36, 1995.

- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *Direito e Democracia: entre facticidade e validade*, vol. I e II, Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1997.
- HILL, Kevin & HUGHES, John, *Cyberpolitics: Citizen activism in the age of the Internet*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.
- MAIA, Rousiley, *Redes cívicas e internet: do ambiente informativo denso às condições da deliberação pública*, in EISENBERG, José & CEPIK, Marco (org.), *Internet e política: teoria e prática da democracia eletrônica*, Belo Horizonte, UFMG, 2002.
- MANIN, Bernard, *On legitimacy and political deliberation. A sketch of a theory of political deliberation*, *Political Theory*, 15(3), pp. 338-368, 1987.
- NORRIS, Pimpa, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information: Poverty and the Internet in Democratic Societies*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- POSTER, Mark, *What's the Matter with the Internet?*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- SCHUMPETER, Joseph, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York, Harper, 1984.
- SILVA, Fernando Carreira, *Democracia deliberativa: Avaliando os seus limites*, Comunicação apresentada no II Congresso da Associação Portuguesa de Ciência Política, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Consultado na Internet a 3 de Janeiro de 2010  
<http://www.ces.fe.uc.pt/publicacoes/oficina/203/203.pdf>, 2004.
- SILVEIRINHA, Maria João, *Democracia deliberativa e reconhecimento: Repensar o espaço público*, *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens, Retórica*, nº 36, 2005.
- SUNSTEIN, Cass, *Republic.com*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- WILHEM, Anthony, *Virtual sounding Boards: how deliberative is online political discussion*, in HAGUE, Barry & LOADER, Brian, *Digital democracy: Discourse and Decision Making in the Information Age*, London: Routledge, pp. 154-178, 1999
- WILHEM, Anthony, *Democracy in the Digital Age*, London, Routledge, 2000.



## Babelisation of mediated debate, public deliberation through the press and emerging democracies of Southern Africa: the case of Zambia.

Pascal Mwale

### Synopsis.

This paper outlines features and dynamics of the debate around GM maize in the print news media from the late 1990s to early 2000s in Zambia, one of the six hunger-stricken Southern African countries in the 2001/2002 farming season. The paper tracks down how, at least, three key issues, seen to be development issues, namely, food security, foreign aid, and GM seed, were debated in the media. The paper argues that the media debate implicating GMOs 'babelised' with multiple effects for science communication and democracy. The question suggested by this analysis is: what kind of journalistic production are theorists and practitioners of journalism and media envisioning in terms of science communication as an emerging form of development communication in the post-repressive, postcolonial democracies of the Southern African region?

### Introduction.

This draft paper outlines features and dynamics of the debate around GM maize in the print news media from the late 1990s to early 2000s in Zambia, one of the hunger-stricken Southern African countries in the 2001/2002 farming season. In that season, the region experienced hunger in six countries –Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Angola and Mozambique - and in response to the hunger, the western donor community (the UN WFP and the US government) offered food aid in the form of GM wholegrain maize to the hunger-stricken countries in 2002. To be exact, in 2002, the US government offered loans to Southern African governments for them to buy GM maize from American commercial farmers to feed 14-15 million hungry people. Zambia rejected the offer unambiguously. Thus, food security and foreign aid are development issues that the media surfaced early on in the regional debate around GM maize. Noteworthy is the leading role of the United States government in the global foreign monetary aid and technical assistance to the underdeveloped regions of the world; this assumed leading role of the United States of America is historical and it was stated unambiguously and explicitly soon after the end of World War II. In

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 231-253



1949, announcing the USA's leading role in the economic development (including the coercive introduction of democracy concomitant with the promise of foreign aid for the modernisation) of less developed countries (LDCs) after World War II, President Harry Truman said unequivocally,

Since the end of hostilities, the United States has invested its substance and its energy in a great constructive effort to restore peace, stability, and freedom to the world ... We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available to the improvement and growth of under-developed areas. (USA President Harry Truman's *Inaugural Address of January 20, 1949*, pp.3-4)

In line with the development vision of President Truman, the post-World War II period has seen massive inflows of foreign monetary aid and technical assistance as well as the importation of western cultural values and ideas to the southern hemisphere, most of all to Africa. Donor funds for spreading the liberation package of democracy, freedom and human rights (to counter communism) and hope and salvation from poverty (in 1949, half the peoples of the world were living in abject poverty, unmitigated economic- material deprivation, and untold misery) have since been unabated in Africa, Mesoamerica, the Middle East, and Asia. The four Asian Tigers, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan (Republic of China) have materialized most of Truman's development vision, in essence a modernization project. However, in most of the underdeveloped regions, the bulk of the foreign monetary aid has fallen to abuse, corruption and waste. From the 1950s to 1960s, Africa alone got in excess of US\$ 600 billion of monetary aid whose projects were looted by African state leaders but the western donors looked away as long as these native rulers were seen to be anti-communist. For example, in Asia's Indonesia, the thoroughly-corrupt, authoritarian, military regime of General Mohammed Suharto registered massive abuse and waste of foreign monetary aid. The western donor community and Japan looked away because the Suharto regime (1967-1998) was anti-communist. To date, the global foreign aid total stands in excess of US\$100 billion per year and the regular donors include industrialized nations such as the USA, Canada, Great Britain, France, the Nordic countries, and, more recently, China, as well as the American Foundations Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, Mellon, and lately Bill & Melinda Gates. Of course, the liberation package of democracy, freedom and human rights has undoubtedly spread and been established in most of the LDCs. However, overall, the southern hemisphere is still wallowing in abject poverty; to date, in the 2000s, most of the LDCs are much poorer, hungrier, unhealthier, more insecure than they were three to four decades ago. (McPhail, 2009, pp.4-5)

The key motivation for Zambia's unambiguous rejection of the offer of the loan to buy US-produced GM maize was the dependency feared to be reinstalled on the GM seed of the biotech multinationals such as the global biotech giant Monsanto.



Due to the ‘terminator technology’,<sup>1</sup> GM seed is not recyclable and (especially, poor, small-scale) farmers cannot save it in one season for planting in the next season.<sup>2</sup> GM seed is patented and the seed companies have intellectual property rights (IPR) over it. Monsanto is a central player in the introduction and spread of GM cropping in South Africa and the region. (*The Sunday Times*, August 24, 1999) Monsanto, based in St Louis, Missouri in the United States is a multinational biotech corporation. It is the world’s largest producer of the herbicide glyphosate, marketed as Roundup Ready. Monsanto is also by far the leading producer of GM seed, holding 70% to 100% world market share for seed for a variety of GM crops. In the specific instance of GM seed, the regional anxiety is about the monopolistic control by the biotech multinationals such as Monsanto over the region’s seed market.

The anxiety about foreign seed companies’ colonisation of and monopolistic control over the regional seed market has a historical basis; by 2002, Monsanto had bought off a number of major seed companies in the region, such as The National Seed Company of Malawi, the only supplier of seed in that country at the time. Zambia and Zimbabwe have resisted Monsanto’s encroachment into their national seed markets.<sup>3</sup> South Africa did not block Monsanto; it has a free market and so biotech multinationals are free to invest in the country. Indeed, by 2002, Monsanto had obtained trading licenses with the three South Africa-based major seed companies, Pioneer Hi-Bred, Pannar Seed, and Delta and Pine Land. It is also noteworthy that Pioneer Hi-Bred is the largest American dealer in hybrid seeds for agriculture and Southern African small-scale farmers have been planting hybrid seed for various crops such as maize, tobacco, cotton, for many decades –long before the onset of GM seed in the late 1990s. Hybrid seed, like GM seed, is generally non-recyclable between farming seasons. Other global biotech industry giants that have penetrated the region’s seed markets, through South Africa, are Syngenta SeedCo (Switzerland and the US) and Aventis (France and Germany). Between the three of them (Monsanto, Syngenta, and Aventis), they have the capacity to colonise the entire region’s GM seed market. Such western oligopolies could render the Southern African farmers dependent perpetually on GM seed. Moreover, the adoption of GM cropping could lead to the loss of the

<sup>1</sup> For University of Cape Town microbiology Professor Jennifer Thomson, the “terminator technology was originally developed for two main reasons. The first was to prevent the spread of genes via pollen. . . . The second was to protect the ‘proprietary property’ developed by a seed company. Everybody understands the need for seed companies, like software manufacturers or record companies, to protect their property and investment in research and development. However, when this protection was applied to seeds, it threatened the ability of poor farmers to keep and plant their own seed. ‘Terminator technology’ was received with a storm of objections.” (Thomson, 2002, p.45)

<sup>2</sup> On this point though, Thomson disagrees; for her, farmers in Africa have been using commercial, non-recyclable hybrid seed for years; the suppliers of these hybrid seeds are multinational companies and their local licensees. She argues, “Transgenic seeds are simply a further improvement on these hybrids.” (Thomson, 2002, p.159)

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, <http://www.gmwatch.org/archive2.asp?ArcId=1006>. Retrieved in December 2007

European markets; until 2003, the European Union had imposed a moratorium on the commercialisation of GM products. For Pelletier (2005), it is not an understatement that in the region “the major drivers of agricultural biotechnology [are] bilateral and international agencies, the trans-national industry, national scientists and specialists.” (Pelletier in Omamo and von Grebmer, 2005, p.117) In this region, as a scientific and technological development initiative, GM technology in agriculture is led and driven by the West. Thus, the dependency of Southern African small-scale farmers on the GM seed of the western biotech oligopolies is another development issue that subsequently emerged in the regional debate. The paper will track down how these three issues<sup>4</sup> –food security, foreign aid, and GM seed – were debated as development issues in the print news media in 2002, at the peak of the regional hunger, in Zambia, as a specific case of the regional debate.

## **Food Security, Foreign Aid and Seed in Southern Africa.**

### **Drought: Southern Africa’s challenge.**

African agriculture is rain-fed. Less than 4 per cent of cropped area in Africa is irrigated. In Southern Africa itself, the irrigated area is about 2 per cent. About 40 percent of farmers grow crops in arid or semi-arid regions marked by long dry seasons and scant rainfall even in the rainy season. Dry spells in the gardens set strict limits on the agricultural productivity of farm labor. Discussing the centrality of rain in African agronomy, Paarlberg (2008) relates closely our three development issues on the continent:

Dryness determines which crops they can plant and how well the crops perform, and cyclical drought is a constant threat to income. If a farmer decides, encouraged by a few wet years, to purchase seeds and fertilizer to expand crop production, the investment can be wiped out if the rains then fail, come too late, or don’t last long enough. When crops fail due to drought, income falls and expenses must be covered either by borrowing, if credit can be found, or by selling off household assets. . . Dryness in the fields deepens and perpetuates poverty. (Paarlberg, 2008, p. 149)

Seed purchased in a drought-threatened region is an irrecoverable loss of income to the farmer if the rains fail or are inadequate. During drought, western donors only provide relief food and they do not assist farmers by way of compensating for the loss of income in having purchased seed. Relief food, though much appreciated, does not break the chain of poverty. Thus, the dependency on rain is precarious

<sup>4</sup> Methodologically, for this paper, I have selected only three issues out of a plethora of issues in the regional debate centered on GM maize. Obviously, in the larger project, the PhD thesis, there are many issues tracked down across 230 articles

for African agronomy. All of this applies to the macro region of Southern Africa. In the 1991/1992 farming season, drought in Southern Africa cut aggregate cereal production by more than 50 per cent on average. In Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, for example, cereal production actually fell 60-70 per cent, putting 17-20 million people at risk of starvation. In the 2001/2002 farming season, drought struck the region again, putting 14-15 million people at risk of starvation. Until 2005, the region was still food insecure. The ripple effects of the 2001/2002 drought were still being felt in most of the region during and after 2005.

## Drought and Foreign aid.

Due to the steady inflow of foreign aid to the continent, food shortages induced by drought rarely result in famine in any part of Africa including Southern Africa. Foreign aid, however, does not break the shackles of poverty strengthened by cyclical drought. For Paarlberg, "Thanks to international food aid, drought-induced crop failures in Africa are less likely than in the past to induce famine, but dryness in the fields still brings to Africa's poor a damaging decline in income and wealth." (Paarlberg, 2008, p. 149) For example, a much wider drought of the mid 1980s that affected eastern and western Africa - drought that forced over 10 million farmers to abandon their farmlands - stimulated a commendable humanitarian assistance response by the western donor community; an unprecedented US\$1 billion relief effort saved millions from starvation. During the 1991/1992 drought, relief effort was timely and was facilitated by an improved Global Information and Early Warning System(GIEWS) of UN FAO, a strong Famine Early Warning System Network(FEWS-Net) of USAID, and the close coordination between international food aid donors, the UN WFP, relevant NGOs, and committed performance by the affected Southern African governments. (Pinstrup-Andersen, Pandya-Lorch, Babu, 1997) In the next cycle of the drought of 2001/2002, the region showed an increased dependence on western food aid.<sup>5</sup> Even Zambia's refusal of the UNWFP's offer of the US-produced GM maize did not lead to any deaths by starvation in that country; humanitarian assistance efforts were made to obtain non-GM maize for the Zambians from within the region.

However, these humanitarian assistance triumphs merely prevent deaths by starvation during drought but drought deepens poverty in the region. For Paarlberg, "These humanitarian assistance triumphs obscure the impoverishing impacts of drought that even an emergency food aid cannot fully address. Starvation is avoided, but im-

<sup>5</sup> For example, for Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, the UN country-specific estimates on the number of people affected severely by the famine and the corresponding amounts of maize food aid required during the famine were as follows:- Zambia: 2.9 million; 400 000 metric tons; Malawi: 3 million; 300 000 metric tons; Zimbabwe: 6.7 million; 500 000 metric tons, respectively

poverishment is not.”(Paarlberg, 2008, p. 155)<sup>6</sup> Further, resettlement of people to areas that are less prone to drought does not work in Africa. Paarlberg observes,

Population resettlement away from dry areas is a strategy that has worked in some countries, but it is seldom an option in Africa. . . In Africa the number of farmers vulnerable to drought makes this kind of relocation impossible. Recall that 40 percent of all production in Africa comes from hot, dry, and nonirrigated lands prone to drought devastation. (Paarlberg, 2008, pp.156-7)

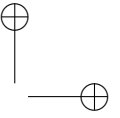
Thus, the way forward seems to be the adoption of drought-tolerant (DT) crops in Africa. Logically, DT crops in a bad year are more valuable than crops able to give high yields in a good year. Unfortunately, high-yield crops are generally difficult for the poor, rural farmers because of their high input demands such as hybrid seed and chemical fertilizer. On nonirrigated lands high-yield crop varieties turn instantly into low-yield crops if the rains fail or are inadequate. Nevertheless, one viable scientific solution to the drought-proneness of the region is the introduction of DT cereal crops such as maize, wheat and rice –especially maize, the chief staple food of Southern Africans. However, the task of introducing DT crops is hampered by the fact that it is externally-driven. Paarlberg cites two reasons for the virtual impossibility to introduce DT crops in Africa:

The task of delivering DT crops to the poor should be one for public sector foreign assistance agencies like the U.S. Agency for International Development, working with international financing institutions like the World Bank and the international agricultural research system of the CGIAR<sup>7</sup>. Yet when given an initial opportunity to invest in this project in 2004-05, these institutions hesitated. To some extent this was because science-based farm productivity growth was no longer a priority for them, but equally important was the fact that the new DT crops would be GMOs, and thus likely to encounter political resistance and regulatory blockage. (Paarlberg, 2008, p.151)

Regional political resistance to GM crops refers to the fear of the reinstallation of dependency on the métropole – a colonial legacy anxiety in itself. Insofar as African agronomy remains rain fed, Africa continues to face a drought challenge which does not come from “the greater variability of its rainfall but from its lack of any technological protection against those [rainfall] variations.” (Paarlberg, 2008, p.153) Even worse, irrigation is not the solution to the problem of low rainfall in Africa. For Paarlberg,

<sup>6</sup> Impoverishment sets in a variety of ways, for example, erratic and higher food prices on the largely unregulated market, selling off household assets, more debt, cutting back on nonfood expenses such as school fees leading to children falling behind in school, shifting labor into risky nonfarm activities (such as selling second-hand clothes, crafts, panning for gold), eating fewer meals a day leading to poorer physical conditions

<sup>7</sup> Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

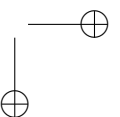
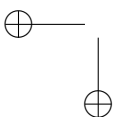


Only 4 per cent of cultivated land in sub-Saharan Africa is currently protected with irrigation... The irregular topography of much of Africa makes irrigation difficult. Bad roads and poor power infrastructures only add to the historically high engineering and construction costs... Also, given the relatively thin population density of many of Africa's farmlands, irrigation investments can be hard for governments to justify on a per-capita basis. (Paarlberg, 2008, p.153)

Bearing these challenges in mind, it remains to be seen how, for example, Malawi, inspired by India's Green Revolution, will implement its Greenbelt Initiative, a grand irrigation project running along the lakeshores and the bank of the Shire River. The vicious cycle of food insecurity, foreign aid, and strictly commercially-accessible seed remains worrisome in terms of development in that there are no viable solutions for breaking the cycle. Crucially, the GM debate in the media in Zambia in 2002 surfaced all these development issues but the communication exchanges did not go as far as proposing viable solutions or hints on the way forward.

## **Normative ideals about the media and development communication.**

Media in democratic nation-states in LDCs are expected to facilitate development communication by disseminating, and educating the masses about, the development agenda of governments, over and above their other traditional role as the watchdog or the Fourth Estate. Thus, one would necessarily assume that development-related issues would be debated in the media, both print and broadcast media in LDCs; that the media would facilitate ongoing deliberation on topical development issues in communities with both public and private development stakeholders in LDCs. One would also be justified to assume that journalists in LDCs would be conductors of debate, controlling, inducing and managing it, ensuring that issues are probed beneath the surface and that they are debated well, all the way down to their conclusion or at least to the highest possible level of complexity. Truthful, fair, balanced, in-depth and interesting reporting and re-presentation of issues in media debate would characterize the sort of communication on development issues. These assumptions comprise the traditional, western enlightenment ideals of public debate in a democracy as envisioned by German philosophers Immanuel Kant in the 18<sup>th</sup> century - *public reasoning* - and Jürgen Habermas (1989[1962]) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century - *rational-critical debate*. Nevertheless, even if in the Zambian debate handled by the print news media, the theme of development features strongly, the debate did not unfold according to the western enlightenment ideals. Media coverage did not take up development issues for sustained debate as in critical engagement.



## Media coverage of the three development issues.

### Food Security.

#### Food security (abuse of donor funds and regulatory blocks in Chiluba's regime).

In June 2002, in *The Post* article entitled "Chiluba's ASIP was a total failure-FAO" (June 18, 2002), Zambia's representative to UN FAO Richard Fuller was reported as having said that GM technology in agriculture was not appropriate for Zambia because the country did not have a well-developed agricultural system and it lacked a regulatory framework for the controversial science and technology. Thus, on the surface, this appears as a safety concern, but there is more at stake. In the report, Fuller's anxiety around the absence of a regulatory framework for GM technology in agriculture was related to his concern about the Chiluba regime's "mismanagement" of donor funds intended to boost small-scale farming under the Agricultural Sector Investment Program (ASIP) in the period mid to late 1990s. (June 18, 2002) Here I see the UN agency engaged in criticism of the Zambian state. The coverage continues to explore directly the practical and economic concern about the adoption of GM crops in what, on the surface, looks as though it is a scientific controversy. Notably, the state does not respond to the criticism.

#### Food security (massive hunger in the region).

A day later, *The Post* article entitled "UN works on emergency food appeal for Zambia" (June 19, 2002) reported a radio interview in which UN WFP country director Richard Ragan had been asked whether Zambia would get GM maize as relief food. The article focussed on the intervention of the UN WFP in light of the massive hunger that was ravaging Zambia and the region. Here I see the emergence of a food-need issue (the urgency, immediacy and immensity of the hunger) in the coverage. The subject matter of GM maize in particular only came towards the very end of the article. Ragan was reported as having said that the UN agency was considering donating relief maize, which would be genetically modified, to Zambia. Zimbabwe was reported to have already rejected a shipment of GM maize from the US. (Zimbabwe's initial rejection of the offer was attributed partly<sup>8</sup> to human health and environmental safety concerns. Eventually, Zimbabwe accepted the offer). In the report, Ragan was reported as having said that the hunger was a matter of urgency requiring immediate intervention because it was immense, affecting most severely orphans, the elderly, the terminally ill, and other vulnerable people in Zambian society. In effect, Ragan

<sup>8</sup> In addition to and over and above safety concerns, there were political concerns motivating Zimbabwe's initial rejection of the UN WFP's offer of US-produced GM maize

raised the issue of GM maize against the background of food need in Zambia. On this issue, Ragan was quoted directly as having said,

Our feeling is that orphans and vulnerable people will be at risk because the price of mealie will be up. We need to move now because in all likelihood, it's going to take sometime before we bring the food. We got to get the food pipeline today. (June 19, 2002)

In this quotation, by presenting the hunger as being urgent and immense, requiring immediate relief, Ragan is driving a food-need argument. Hunger is definitely a major event in the debate. As always, the most vulnerable people in society need most urgently the intervention of international relief organisations such as the UN WFP and FAO, especially in a situation where the nation-state, for whatever reason, is unable to reach out immediately to its people.

### **Food Security (poor agricultural policies but not drought to blame for the hunger).**

While acknowledging adverse weather as a contributing negative factor leading to the regional hunger partly due to the prolonged drought, the editorial comment blamed Zambia's hunger on "several poor [agricultural] policies" of the previous regime, Frederick Chiluba's administration:

It is a fact that the agricultural sector [has] been on the decline due to the several poor policies that were implemented by Chiluba's government. Chiluba had managed to reduce Zambia's agricultural potential from being self-sustaining to being dependent on food imports. Even the move to establish the Food Reserve Agency to enhance food security has been a lamentable failure and left farmers in a more desperate situation. There is no doubt that this desperate situation in the agricultural sector calls for immediate corrective measures. But while this is being done, there is a serious threat of hunger to be addressed, also urgently. (July 30, 2002)

In this quotation, the Southern African postcolonial-democratic regime of Zambia is being criticised for being policy-wise inept in the agricultural sector. Generally, Chiluba's tenure (1991-2002) was notorious for both high-level (grand) corruption and extremely poor service delivery. Notably, the hunger is being reported as urgent, but unlike UN WFP's Ragan who drives a food-need argument, the editorial comment is not making any appeal for relief food; it is merely acknowledging "a serious threat of hunger" in Zambia.

**Food Security (GM technology in agriculture equals ‘saviour science’).**

Dr. Luke Mumba said, “It [agricultural biotechnology] is a powerful weapon in Zambia’s war on poverty and hunger. . .” (*The Post*, July 29 and 31, 2002) In response, Dr. Timothy Mwanza,

If GM maize containing the terminator gene is planted and cross-pollinates with our organic maize, we risk destroying the engine of our food security that is driven by small-scale farmers that depend on storing seed from their own harvest. Small-scale farmers produce over 80 per cent of maize in Zambia, thus as a union we are against this veiled form of colonization from the US.” (*The Post*, August 1, 2002)

In this quotation, Dr. Mwanza’s concern is about the consequences of adopting GM crops for Zambia’s food security rather than about the safety of GM foods for human health or the environment. Here I see that the issue of food security emerges in the coverage. For him, the “terminator gene” has the potential to destroy the informal seed sub-sector. Adopting a trade unionist (social activist) voice, Dr. Mwanza is casting the American GM maize in particular and GM technology in agriculture in general as a “veiled form of colonisation from the US,” in itself an anti-colonialist positioning. Dr. Mwanza is pointing to the region’s historical circumstance of colonialism, the re-installation of which he is resisting.

**Food Security (Severe hunger in rural Zambia; people eating wild roots!).**

On August 10, 2002, in *The Post* article entitled “If government refuses our maize, we will divert it to countries that need it – says US”, North Carolina Congressional Representative Eva Clayton was reportedly concerned about the severity of the hunger in rural Zambia – leading to total starvation and desperation there. On the severity of the hunger in rural areas, Clayton said, “People in Lusitu are depending on wild roots.” This quotation exemplifies Clayton’s perception of the hunger, especially in rural Zambia in 2002, as being urgent, immediate, and immense.

**Food Security (end debate before people start dying of hunger).**

On August 12, 2002, in *The Post* article entitled “End GM maize debate before people start dying – Moonde,” United Party for National Development (UPND) parliamentarian Japhet Moonde said that he was concerned about the debate in that it was happening while the people were starving. On the issue of GM maize against the background of the food need, Moonde said,



The debate going on as to whether or not to accept the GMO must end. The people want food and not academic but unfruitful debates. [S]omething must be done with or without GMOs to address the hunger situation. This government must not play politics on the hunger situation. (August 12, 2002)

In this quotation, for Moonde, there is an urgent need for relief food in Zambia and the GM debate is a luxury for the elite, state officials and politicians. Yet, in his insisting, “The debate . . . on . . . GMO must end,” Moonde was in effect dangerously arguing for closure of the debate, in itself a threat to democracy, which thrives, on debate and deliberation on issues at stake in society. Perhaps his impatience lies in the fact that he found the debate “academic” and “unfruitful.” Moonde criticised the state, saying, “This government must not play politics on the hunger situation.” For him, the Zambian state leaders’ indecision was endangering many people’s lives in the country. Moonde’s criticism of the Zambian state is unique because it is criticism from within the domain of party politics where there is a tendency for the political opposition to adopt a counter-position to the ruling party on every issue in the polity.

## Foreign Aid.

### Foreign aid (the dignity of the hungry).

In the next article, the hunger was reported as urgent, immediate and immense. But, in spite of the food need, there arose an ethical-political issue - the dignity of the hungry people. On July 30, 2002, in *The Post* editorial entitled “Dignity in hunger”, the article took an ethical-political angle to the debate. While framing the hunger as “a major humanitarian crisis” which, without the intervention of “external partners,” could degenerate into “a serious catastrophe” affecting “over two million people,” the editorial comment went thus, “Zambians need to have dignity even in times of suffering and hunger” and that “even beggars deserve some dignity.” For the editor, the human dignity of Zambians was at stake because the American loan offer to Southern African states came with stringent conditions, one of which was that the money had to be used to buy maize from American commercial farmers only and it would be GM maize. The editorial comment raised two issues that are featuring for the first time in the coverage – human dignity, which is ethical-political, and foreign aid, which is practical and economic. The problem for the Zambian state was that the American maize would necessarily be genetically modified. The editorial comment juxtaposed the ethical-political issue of human dignity with the practical and economic issue of foreign aid:

Zambia's plea for aid has been well received and we appreciate the international community's favourable response to this crisis that is currently brewing. But as they

offer their assistance, they should also acknowledge that even the beggars deserve some dignity. Of concern to most Zambians and all other countries affected by the food deficit in the region is the issue of the Genetically Modified Maize from the US. While the gesture of assistance may be well meant, it is a matter of concern that the US has set as a condition that it would only provide funds to purchase the genetically modified grain. (July 30, 2002)

The raising of the issue of human dignity in relation to foreign aid amounts to criticism of the US government. This is political criticism targeted at an external power and authority, a superpower. However, the article does not confine criticism to superpowers; the Zambian state equally faces criticism.

### **Foreign aid (globalisation).**

A social theorist took the Zambian GM debate to another level –global politics and economics. On August 2, 2002, in *The Post* article entitled “Who needs GM foods”, proffering his view on the state’s rejection of the offer, UNZA social anthropologist Dr. Owen Sichone was referred to as having said that Mwanawasa’s rejection of the offer was a “nationalist” attitude that could prove costly “in the globalized arena of international politics.” Dr. Sichone reportedly argued that in a neo-colonial setting, such as Zambia in 2002, Mwanawasa’s rejection of the offer would make him unpopular in the West. Dr. Sichone was trying to demonstrate his expert knowledge on the dynamics of globalisation<sup>9</sup> vis-à-vis Africa-West relations. For him, while it was hard for a “beggar nation” like Zambia to reject offers of any food aid, including yellow maize, Zambians could slow down the “slide into dependency” on handouts from the métropole. Dr. Sichone also appeared to be concerned about the IPR and

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Giddens coined the term ‘globalisation’ in the 1980s, in the sisterly disciplinary areas of sociology and international relations. It implies interconnectedness of human agencies across the globe, leading to increasing interaction and interdependency, inter-territorially. (Thompson, 1995) There are three schools of thought on globalisation: (a) *cultural theorists*: tend to (positively) look at globalisation as having the potential to improve inter-territorial dialogue, empowering minorities, and progressive solidarity worldwide; (b) *political economists*: tend to look at globalisation negatively as economic re-colonization and sub-imperialism of the periphery by the centre, and hence a serious threat to the sovereignty of the nation-states and regional practical and economic integration and continental unification; (c) *communication media theorists* tend to look at globalisation positively. For them, the globalized diffusion happens at the same time as localized appropriation of messages originating at a distance—symbolic distancing is countered by active and creative local uptake of mediated information and communication. There are two shared concerns about globalisation, viz. (a) one-way and uneven flow of goods, that is, from North to South; (b) inequitable distribution of global communication networks (oligopolies) and unequal access to media. Part of the concern involves international regimes historically-problematic status and role in the periphery: IMF, World Bank, and the UN. Regional and continental regimes – for example, the AU, SADC, ECOWAS, NEPAD - suspect the status and role of these international regimes in some countries, and hence the vogueish talk of regional practical and economic integration, and sometimes of the unification of Africa

patents of the biotech multinationals and, for him, GM crops were “designed to make the companies that own the patents for particular genes super rich.” Dr. Sichone was suggesting that the chief beneficiaries of GM cropping were the biotech multinationals. In the same article, Dr. Sichone was also referred to as having been concerned about the economic injustice in the agricultural sector globally; poor countries were barred from subsidising the inputs of their farmers whereas rich countries gave hefty farm input subsidies to theirs. On this issue, Dr. Sichone was quoted directly as having said, “The aristocratic and thoroughly inefficient EU farmers and US food corporations [get] unfair subsidies,” which, for him, is a global condition that has made the poor “beggar nations” and the rich “super rich.” Thus, concerning the issue of foreign aid, Dr. Sichone points to the global inequality between Africa and the West. For the social anthropologist, the Zambian GM debate is unmistakably practical and economic with global overtones. It can be seen that in this article, in various ways, Dr. Sichone addresses the global inequality between the rich North and the poor South – within the context of globalisation, and in the process, he surfaces new key issues broadly described as the IPR and patents of the biotech multinationals, and farm input subsidies. Importantly, he addresses the global inequality that underlies the two macro-regions of the world, the North and the South. Importantly, in Dr. Sichone’s hands, the practical and economic element in the Zambian GM debate takes on a global character.

### **Foreign aid (conditions on the American loan offer to the region).**

Eventually, a representative of an international financing institution responded to the issue of foreign aid that had emerged in *The Post* editorial comment of July 30, 2002 and had recurred in the same newspaper on August 1, 2002 in the hands of Dr. Mwanza. On August 12, 2002, in *The Post* article entitled “It will be tragic if Lusaka rejects GM maize – Ellyne”, IMF Resident Representative Mark Ellyne was referred to as having addressed the issue of the conditions that came with US loans to Southern Africa. For Ellyne, Zambia was required to use the loan to access maize only from the US and that the US and the IMF had dictated that the US \$ 50 million loan offered to Zambia be used to procure maize only from the American commercial farmers and under the IMF programs Zambia was barred from seeking alternative arrangements. Further, Ellyne counselled that Zambians did not have any better option than the American GM maize, and he warned the Zambian state thus: “If you don’t get this food you will be paying more money, which you don’t have, for the same quantity of food”. Interestingly, an integral part of the dynamics to the foreign aid issue is that potential recipient governments have no alternative to loan offers. This grim reality is being highlighted in Ellyne’s quotation, a thing that speaks to the global inequality Dr. Sichone saw earlier.

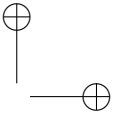
### Foreign aid (genetic experimentation and the USA's beneficence).

On August 14, 2002, in *The Post* article entitled "US sheds more light on GM maize," UPND parliamentarian Charles Kakoma raised the issue of genetic experimentation. Kakoma said the GM maize food aid was a form of genetic experimentation. In a speech in parliament, Kakoma urged the Zambian state leaders to destroy by burning on fire the 23,000 metric tons of GM maize wholegrain stored in the UN WFP warehouses in Zambia. Kakoma said,

In Zambia, we value our lives. These lives cannot be experimented upon ... [By burning the GM maize] we will be sending a signal to our donors that if they want to help, they should do so in good faith. (August 14, 2002)

For Kakoma, Zambians are not guinea pigs; he is expressing an apartheid legacy anxiety. Additionally, Kakoma is addressing the global inequality (underpinning foreign aid) that Dr. Sichone had seen earlier. Unlike Moonde who had criticised the Mwanawasa regime, Kakoma is criticising the western donor community, by implication, saying that western states give donor aid to Africa in 'bad faith'. As I show below, the US embassy in Lusaka responded partly to the criticism about its food aid program. In the same article, a representative of the US embassy in Lusaka who had attended the national consultation [*indaba*]<sup>10</sup> of August 13, 2002 complained that the US had been misrepresented at the *indaba*. A representative of the US embassy in Lusaka said, "Instead of building more schools or roads in America, the US government has, for humanitarian reasons, dedicated significant resources each year to help feed vulnerable people around the world". (August 14, 2002) This was the first time that the US government responded to the criticism about the stringency of the conditions that came with its food aid to Zambia and the region. But the response is only partial because it does not fully address Kakoma's perception of 'bad faith' underlying US-Africa relations. In this quotation, the embassy is asserting that the US gives food aid on humanitarian grounds and that it would rather invest in improving its educational and road transport infrastructures. Unlike in the example of real debate above whereby the participants had the same perspective, kept focus on the same topic, stuck to the point, and responded to the point, here the only things that give the impression that Kakoma and the US embassy representative are engaged in communication exchange is that they are sometimes speaking to the same issue – foreign aid – but on this issue, they nearly miss each other's point. Moreover, Kakoma has another issue – genetic experimentation – which does not get any response from the US embassy representative. In this respect, the communication between Kakoma and the US embassy representative is an instance of a debate-like exchange albeit weak engagement.

<sup>10</sup> See Brighton Phiri, "US Comes Under Attack over GMOs." *The Post*, August 13, 2002



### **Foreign aid (conspiracy: biological pacification of developing world leadership).**

In spite of trying to render its image positive, the US continued to be presented negatively in the Zambian debate. This time around, the US becomes a victim of a ‘conspiracy theory.’ On August 22, 2002, in *The Post* article entitled “Genetically modified,” journalist Roy Clarke featured GM foods and crops. In the feature article, Clarke referred to his daughter Kupela Clarke as having suspected a conspiracy between the US government and the biotech industry in such a way that those who ate GM maize would become “biologically pacified.” He quoted his daughter directly as having said that GM foods were

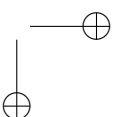
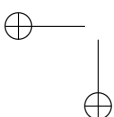
one of Bush’s weapons of mass distraction! . . . The Americans have been feeding us modified food with the gene of a mouse to make us all docile, and obey the American government. (August 22, 2002)

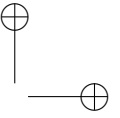
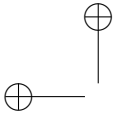
In this quotation, the global inequality to which Dr. Sichone had alluded previously is being taken up but to a higher level – underdog or beggar nation-states such as Zambia are genetically modified such that they are tame before and loyal to superpowers such as the US. In this conspiracy theory, American GM technology as applied to humans would be serving the questionable purposes of eugenics<sup>11</sup>; that is, to breed genetically modified humans.

### **GM seed(fear of the death of the informal seed sub-sector).**

On July 30, 2002, civil society commended the Zambian state for its unambiguous rejection of the offer. In *The Post* article entitled “Zambia shouldn’t be pushed into accepting GMOs – JCTR,” two representatives of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) – Fr. Muweme Muweme and Fr. Pete Henriot - were reported to have been concerned about the pressure exerted on the Zambian state to accept the offer. Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC) representative Paul Desmarais was reported as having resisted GM cropping because, to his view, it would not be sustainable agriculture for the Zambian small-scale farmers. Desmarais was referred to as having argued for sustainable agriculture for this lowest category of farmers. Adopting an expert voice, for Desmarais, sustainable agriculture meant “promoting a farming system that uses low external inputs and makes greater use of natural resources found at farm level, including seed.” (July 30, 2002) Here, the practical and

<sup>11</sup> Theory and practice of selective breeding applied to human beings and hence a racist form of genetic experimentation





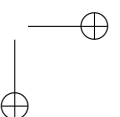
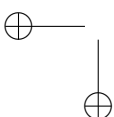
economic issue of sustainable agriculture recurs in the hands of another civil society representative who raises a new issue - seed. Still in the same article, JCTR and KATC biotech consultant Lubozhya was reported as having been concerned about the long-term problems that GM crops would bring to Zambia such as the loss of the European markets in non-GM products, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity and, most tragically, the death of Zambia's informal seed sub-sector. While the issue of seed recurs, the issues of environmental safety, international trade and biodiversity are raised for the first time in the coverage. Thus, the coverage shows the continued predominance of practical and economic concerns (international trade, overtly, and biodiversity, implicitly). Concerning Zambia's informal seed sub-sector, Lubozhya was concerned that the same corporation (Monsanto) owned both the GM seed and the matching agro-chemicals (herbicides and pesticides). (July 30, 2002) Notably, both Desmarais and Lubozhya raised the seed issue. Both issues - international trade and seed - are overtly practical and economic.

### **Slippage at work in the coverage of the Zambian debate.**

This section presents selected examples of instances of rhetorical moves in the coverage of the Zambian debate, three examples of which are illustrative of reframing, three seen to be illustrative of sidestepping, one seen to be illustrative of silencing, and one seen to be illustrative of telescoping. Reframing means seeing approximately the same phenomenon from a different perspective, or setting it up differently and as a result some things emerge in new light or are read differently. Sidestepping means that upon confronting a challenging obstacle, one steps aside and goes on a parallel path –instead of staying on the original path, taking on the challenge, exploring it and clearing the path. Silencing involves the media not giving voice to an addressee who is, otherwise, addressed or provoked directly. Telescoping implies narrowly focussing on an issue or argument for some considerable length of time, in the process eclipsing or blurring wider, complex issues. These are the most important rhetorical moves that were picked out from the coverage of the Zambian debate and some moves function across periods while others happen internal to a particular period.

#### **Reframing: GM seed.**

On July 26, 2002, Natsios and Chinsembu reportedly addressed the issue of human health and safety. (*The Post*, July 26, 2002) In the article, Natsios and Chinsembu disagreed as to whether GM maize was safe or unsafe for human health. The former reportedly said that GM foods were safe for consumption because he fed his family safely on it while the latter said that GM foods were not safe for consumption because there were “genuine fears” about their effects for human health. In this disagreement,



there is some engagement between Natsios and Chinsembu in what the thesis designates as the ‘safety argument’, which is located within what could broadly be described as *logos*. However, Chinsembu changed his view from the issue of human health and safety to that broadly described as GM seed, saying that if GM maize seed turned out to be “superior” to traditional maize seed then the latter would be “wiped out” genetically. Chinsembu’s response belongs to the practical and economic, which is also in *logos*, albeit a different dimension of *logos*. The topic of concern has shifted from safety to GM seed, even if both issues may preliminarily be located within what could broadly be described as *logos*. However, upon close inspection, it can be seen that Chinsembu’s issue of GM seed is double faceted, in that it has a different dimension that belongs to what could broadly be described as *pathos* –the dependency of farmers on the biotech multinationals for GM seed every farming season. Zambian farmers would depend perpetually on the biotech multinationals for GM seed. In introducing the issue of GM seed, the focus of the coverage moves away momentarily from the human health and safety issue to a practical and economic concern. When Chinsembu changed his view from human health and safety to GM seed, a concern about the dependency of farmers on foreign companies emerged in the debate for the first time. In effect, Chinsembu reframed the safety argument into a dependency argument, thereby making a shift from the scientific domain of human health and safety to the historical and practical and economic domain of farmers’ dependency on the GM seed of the biotech multinationals. There is thus a shift from *logos* to *pathos* and hence the rhetorical move of reframing. This suffices as an example of an instance of reframing because the reconstruction involves a major domain shift, leading to slippage in the debate.

In *The Post* column of July 31, 2002, in his ‘science-as-saviour’ view, Dr. Mumba reportedly presented GM technology in agriculture as “a powerful weapon in Zambia’s war on poverty and hunger.” The phrases “powerful weapon” and “war on poverty and hunger” can be located within what could broadly be described as *logos*. On August 1, 2002 in *The Post*, Dr. Mwanza reportedly reconstructed not only Dr. Mumba’s positive portrayal of the agricultural science but also his pro-GM stance. *Contra* Dr. Mumba’s optimism, Dr. Mwanza reportedly presented GM cropping negatively as “a veiled form of colonisation from the US.” The phrase “veiled form of colonisation” can be located within what could broadly be described as *pathos*. Thus, what Dr. Mumba saw as the farmers’ economic liberation (salvation), Dr. Mwanza saw as the farmers’ economic bondage (captivity). Here, the two natural scientists are engaged as in a debate-like exchange. By contrast, in an article of *The Post* of August 2, 2002, UNZA social anthropologist Dr. Owen Sichone responded to Dr. Mumba’s ‘science-as-saviour’ view; the view that “GM foods may turn out to be better for people.” Dr. Mumba’s topic of concern – GM maize as salvation - can be located within what could broadly be described as *logos*. Dr. Sichone viewed any decision leading

to the acceptance of the offer of GM food aid in a different light. He was quoted as having said,

Can such people [hungry Zambians] worry about yellow maize or GM foods? I think many Zambians are already beyond caring. But that is not to say they cannot reverse the slide into dependency... GM foods are not peasant crops; they are designed to make the companies that own the patents for particular genes super rich. (August 2, 2002)

In this quotation, the topic of concern is “the slide into dependency” and it can be located within what could broadly be described as *pathos*. Dr. Sichone has taken an anti-globalisation stance and is addressing the condition of global inequality whereby the rich can choose what to eat but the poor have to make do with whatever is donated to them. Thus, in the hands of Dr. Sichone, there is a shift in perspective from *logos* (GM maize as salvation) to *pathos* (global inequality, leading to greater suffering for the impoverished global South). This is an example of an instance of the rhetorical move of reframing across articles.

Addressing the press on the sidelines of the Johannesburg Earth Summit on August 28, 2002, USAID administrator Andrew Natsios accused African social activists of endangering the lives of millions of famine-threatened Southern Africans by encouraging their governments to reject the offer of US-produced GM maize. Natsios was quoted as having,

They can play these games with Europeans, who have full stomachs, but it is revolting and despicable to see them do so when the lives of Africans are at stake ... The Bush administration is not going to sit there and let these groups kill millions of poor people in Southern Africa through their ideological campaign. (*The Washington Times*, August 31, 2002)

In this quotation, Natsios’s topic of concern is food need, or hunger. His concern can be located in what could broadly be described as *pathos*. For Natsios, the food need in the region was so severe that the state leaders’ indecision, or dilly dallying, amounted to mass murder, or crime against humanity. Since by August 2002 only the Zambia state had maintained a resolute stance against GM maize, Natsios was addressing the Zambian state leaders.

In *The Post* article of August 14, 2002, a representative of the US embassy in Lusaka complained about the misrepresentation at the *indaba* of the US government—that is, as a superpower, it was imposing as GM maize on Southern Africa. The caricaturing of the US government as a superpower imposing unwanted food aid on the region fits into *logos*, albeit another dimension, because it is practical and economic. It is in the nature of foreign aid to be imposed on recipient countries by donor countries (some of which are seen as superpowers). In this article, the representative



did not address the issues of foreign aid and genetic experimentation and yet these issues posed a challenge to Zambia vis-à-vis the matter of the adoption of GM crops. The representative sidestepped the challenge and went on a parallel path, complaining about the misrepresentation of the US government at the national consultation on GM maize. Thus, the unfolding of the two key issues (genetic experimentation and foreign aid) around the historical-political falls away at this point in the coverage, in that the American embassy evades the historical-political and goes on a parallel path, worrying about its government's public image in Zambia and the region.

The next example is that of sidestepping across coverage. It will be recalled that on July 26, 2002, Chinsembu made a dependency argument –the region's poor farmers' unmitigated and perpetual dependency on the GM seed of the biotech multinationals. The topic of concern (dependency) falls within what could broadly be described as *pathos*. On July 30, 2002, Fr. Muweme, Desmarais, Fr. Henriot and Lubozhya added to that perspective. Between them, they raised practical and economic concerns about Zambia's incapacity to conduct risk assessment, or what the article referred to as "no capacity to evaluate, monitor, and sustain health risks"(an issue belonging to what could broadly be described as *logos*); the impossibility of achieving sustainable agriculture through GM cropping (an issue belonging to what could broadly be described as *logos*); the loss of the European market in non-GM produce (an issue belonging to what could broadly be described as *pathos*); and the death of the informal seed sub-sector(an issue belonging to what could broadly be described as *pathos*). Also on July 30, 2002, as it has been seen immediately above, the debate took an ethical-political angle, raising an issue that could broadly be described as belonging to *ethos*. In these three articles, the debate was predominantly located within both *logos* and *pathos* and to some extent within *ethos*. However, the thread of direction set up by Chinsembu, the three civil society representatives (Roman Catholic clerics) and Lubozhya fails to be developed - when in his column, Dr. Mumba evades all these challenges and goes on a parallel path, championing GM technology in agriculture as a 'saviour' science, yet a different dimension of *logos*, thereby evading the issues of *pathos* as well as *ethos* altogether. This is an example of an instance of sidestepping across a period and across a number of articles.

### Silencing.

In the Zambian debate, silencing occurred across coverage on various issues and topics. In the March-June 2002 period of the debate, Dr. Mumba's 'science-as-saviour' view did not, as a particular topic, provoke debate on the potential benefits and risks of adopting GM crops in Zambia and the region. During this particular

period, Dr. Mulenga did not get any response to any of her views,<sup>12</sup> most especially from the biotech multinationals that she reportedly addressed directly. Thus, in general, in spite of their local and regional importance, the issues raised did not elicit any response. The unfolding of the key issue of sustainable agriculture around the argument about the merits and demerits of GM crops in Zambia and the region, *inter alia* the IPR and patents of the biotech multinationals over GM seed, falls away at this early point in the coverage in that the potential addressees are silent. Specifically for the biotech multinationals, their being silent can be seen as either deliberate or inadvertent; if it is deliberate, then it is ‘self-silencing’ and if it is inadvertent then it can be seen as ‘silencing by the media.’ In other words, in spite of their being provoked to debate, the biotech multinationals chose to keep silent-and hence their self-silencing. Journalists could have brought the biotech multinationals into the debate to respond to Dr. Mulenga and others, but this did not happen, perhaps due to technical limitations of the journalistic practice coupled with media professional imperatives, all of which make journalists choose some sources in preference to others in their covering of an issue or event. (Manning, 2001) Otherwise, as players of global capital and big business, the biotech multinationals have immense media resources and communicative capacity (including media front desks operated by public relations officers or company spin-doctors) to respond to provocations publicly. They also have the communication potential to engage in debate in the media with the antagonists and detractors of GM foods and crops. Thus, due to silencing, during this particular period spanning 4 months, the thread of direction set up by the inclusion of practical and economic concerns early on in the coverage fails to be developed in the course of the coverage when potential addressees are silent. Crucially, what is silenced across this particular period is the topic of concern of dependency.

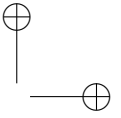
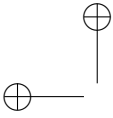
### Telescoping.

Food need is an issue that recurred across the debate in the March–June 2002 period, and so the debate had a particular focus on this issue during this period. In the edition of *The Times of Zambia* of March 12, 2002, the feature article reported of Africa’s “pounding pangs of hunger”; in *The Post*’s edition of April 24, 2002, the report cited Dr. Mulenga as referring to Zambia’s hunger as a “peculiar situation.”

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Dorothy Mulenga appears to have been the first science expert to touch on the paradox of the region, in that it has an *interest* in making progress materially and economically by using the instruments of western science while it has at the same time colonial legacy anxieties about such a science. Western science has a problematic status in Southern Africa because it is closely associated with colonisation – the perpetuating the colonial legacy of epistemic-political dependency of the region on the métropole. Moreover, today, Southern African science is widely seen as inauthentic, nothing more than a copycat exercise in carbon-copy adaptation of western scientific models. Thus, the vulnerability of the region’s science communities is necessarily *epistemic-political*. But, even if the issue is historical-politically interesting, it was not engaged at all in the debate during this particular period

In *The Post*'s edition of June 19, 2002, the newspaper reported UN WFP's plan to intervene in Zambia's hunger situation by offering the US-produced GM maize as relief food. In the feature article and the two reports, Zambia's hunger was said to be immense, urgent and hence requiring immediate intervention – in the form of food aid from the western donor community. In particular, it appears that for Dr. Mulenga, the peculiarity of the hunger situation is that whilst the state could not reject the offer of the GM maize (due to the hunger) easily, at the same time it could not accept the offer easily (due to political considerations). Since the topic of hunger is recurrent throughout the debate during this period, coverage can be said to be telescoping because the domain of the coverage of the debate is narrowed down to that of food need.<sup>13</sup> Telescoping has the effect of the coverage blurring wider political concerns such as historical-political, practical and economic, ethical-political, and epistemic-political concerns. The food-need argument operates in the here-and-now mode, blurring the political challenge posed by GM crops in the long-term. It blurs the major theme, that is, the political considerations around the long-term consequences of adopting GM crops in Zambia and the region. Additionally, in the coverage of the debate during this period, the safety argument operates as another example of telescoping in that the domain of the coverage is sometimes narrowed down to safety. Coverage shows telescoping in the hands of the protagonists – the sources cited or referred to as being primarily concerned about the hunger or safety. During this particular period, wider issues that were left unaddressed due to telescoping include but are not limited to lack of scientific research capacity and infrastructure, the need for sustainable agriculture, and the loss of international trade ties with Europe. Coverage also shows telescoping in the hands of the journalists. Telescoping in the hands of journalists can be attributed to technical limitations of the journalistic practice and media professional imperatives, especially those that have to do with news selection and news making such as 'news value,' 'news sources,' 'gate keeping,' and 'agenda setting.' Largely as a result of these rhetorical moves, the debate babelised in the media

<sup>13</sup> By narrowing the scope of the debate down to hunger, the debate was also oversimplified; for example, the reasons for Zimbabwe's rejection of the offer are not articulated in the report of *The Post*'s issue of June 19, 2002: "Asked if Zambia would get food aid that is genetically modified which Zimbabwe rejected recently; Ragan said some of the food will be genetically modified. Ragan said despite Zimbabwe rejecting some of the food aid recently, they in fact got some of the food that was modified and the only problem was with shipment." (*The Post*, June 19, 2002) Contrary to Ragan's view, due to the unaddressed political concerns, "the only problem" could not have been the "shipment" of the controversial GM maize from the South African port of Durban to Harare



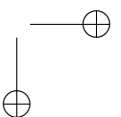
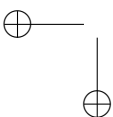
## Media debate and participatory communication.

Part of the inability of the media to communicate GMOs in the region is rooted in the fact that the communication falls in the mode of ‘debate’ rather than in the journalistically more familiar modes of scientific knowledge and information ‘dissemination’ and ‘civic education’, especially on GMOs and things biotechnological in general. It would appear that participatory communication –where dissemination and civic education are widely accepted as the *modus operandi* of public communication–, has not yet been conceptually linked to the idea of ‘debate’ in a democracy. The lingering question suggested by this analysis is then what kind of journalistic production are the theorists and practitioners of journalism and media envisaging in terms of science communication and democracy? Like cultural imperialism and entertainment education, the participatory communication approach was tailored to the development needs of the so-called developing world. In the academia, participatory communication theory began in the late 1970s and rose to prominence in the 1980s. (McPhail, 2009, p.26) For McPhail, proponents of participatory communication theory intended to explain “the power of the individual to influence the world and to find ways to further advocate and enrich such action with the ultimate goal residing in a utopian scenario of positive development for all and better inter-cultural understanding.” (McPhail, 2009, p.27)

Further, for him, participatory communication is all-inclusive and it fits in very well with the democratic ethos because it “thrives on input from people from all walks of life and of every socioeconomic sphere. [It involves] delving into the point of view of native people on their own terms, looking at their culture, and issues that they consider relevant. . . Participatory communication stresses the basic right of all people to be heard, to speak for themselves and not represented or reworded by another party.” (McPhail, 2009, p.27) Participatory communication antedates and anticipates the democratic ethos of all-inclusiveness, especially which, as democratic governance studies, emerged in the early to mid 1990s. At least in theory, participatory communication requires “active listening, respect, and trust are needed on both sides for the model of participatory communication to succeed in such an environment.” (McPhail, 2009, p.28) For this study, therefore, both the media coverage of the three selected development issues and the selected examples of rhetorical moves show important deviations from the enlightenment ideals of public reasoning and rational critical debate as well as the recent model of participatory communication for development in this part of Africa.

## References

HABERMAS, J. (1989), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an*



*inquiry into a category of bourgeois society.* Studies in contemporary German social thought. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

MCPHAIL, T. L. (2009), "Major theories following modernization". In his: *Development Communication: reframing the role of the media*, published online 2009, chapter 2.

MANNING, P. (2001), *News and News Sources: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage

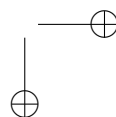
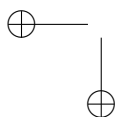
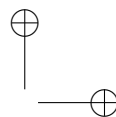
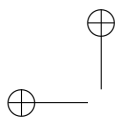
PELLETIER, D. (2005), "Food Safety and Consumer Choice Policy." In: OMAMO, S.W. and VON GREBMER, K. (eds.) (2005) *Biotechnology, Agriculture, and Food Security in Southern Africa*. Washington, DC and Harare: IFPRI and FANRPAN, pp.113-156.

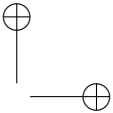
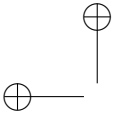
PINSTRUP-ANDERSEN, P., PANDYA-LORCH, R. and BABU, S. (1997) "A 2020 Vision for food, agriculture, and the environment in Southern Africa". In: HADDAD, L. (ed) (1997) *Achieving food security in Southern Africa: new challenges and opportunities*. Washington, DC: IFPRI

THOMPSON, J.B. (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press

THOMSON, J.A. (2002) *Genes for Africa: genetically modified crops in the developing world*. Cape Town: UCT Press

TRUMAN, H. (1949), *Inaugural Address of January 20, 1949*. Washington, DC. US Government Printing Office





## Visibilidade em detrimento da interactividade. O Twitter nas recentes eleições presidenciais de Portugal e do Brasil.

Rui Alexandre Novais  
Viviane Araújo

### Resumo.

Este estudo propõe a análise comparativa das campanhas online dos candidatos à presidência da república do Brasil (2010) e de Portugal (2011). O objectivo consiste em determinar se os dois candidatos melhor colocados nas intenções de voto em ambos os países utilizaram as redes sociais, especialmente o *Twitter*, como ferramenta de interatividade, aproximação e comunicação com o eleitor, ou apenas como uma plataforma adicional para obter visibilidade.

Baseado numa análise de conteúdo dos *tweets* dos candidatos na primeira volta das campanhas, conclui que a discutibilidade proporcionada pela interactividade do ambiente digital foi preterida em prol da utilização pela generalidade dos candidatos do microblogue como forma de divulgar as respectivas agendas e propostas com o intuito de aumentar a sua visibilidade. Os resultados têm implicações em termos da vitalidade e legitimidade na esfera pública na era digital dado que os candidatos não deram voz e vez ao eleitorado e este último não se socorreu do *Twitter* dos candidatos presidenciais como forma de participação na campanha eleitoral.

**Palavras-chave:** Twitter, eleições presidenciais, esfera pública (digital), Portugal, Brasil, participação política, interactividade.

### Abstract.

This article dwells on a comparative analysis of the 2011 Portuguese and 2010 Brazilian presidential online campaigns. It aims to determine whether the two best poll-positioned candidates in both countries resorted to the social networks, and *Twitter* in particular, as an interactive tool to reach and communicate with voters, or just as an additional platform to increase visibility.

Based upon a content analysis of the messages posted by the candidates during the first turn of the elections, it concludes that candidates privileged the usage of the microblog as a vehicle to divulge their campaign agendas and program proposals, so

as to improve their salience and visibility, au lieu of fully exploring the facilities offered by the interactive digital environment. The results impinge upon the vitality and legitimacy of the public sphere in the digital age to the extent that the candidates did not allow the voters to voice their opinions and the latter did not resort to the *Twitter* as a way to participate in the campaign.

**Key Words:** Twitter, presidential elections, (digital) public sphere, Portugal, Brasil, political participation, interactivity.

## Introdução.

A noção de esfera pública tem sido historicamente associada a uma rede de comunicação informativa e de perspectivas (Habermas, 1996) ou um espaço onde os públicos se congregam e se envolvem no diálogo e discussão acerca de assuntos de interesse comum (Jacobs, 2000). De facto, tal comunicação ou debate protagonizado por um público variado constitui um dos esteios da esfera pública, cujo garante assenta sobretudo na liberdade de expressão e na igualdade de oportunidades conferida a todos os potenciais participantes.

Mais recentemente, o conceito de esfera pública tem assumido particular pertinência e relevância em termos do papel que tanto os media tradicionais como os novos media podem desempenhar no âmbito da discussão política. Aliás o protagonismo dos media convencionais aliado às potencialidades de participação política online dos novos media, e das redes sociais em particular, tendem a reclamar a necessidade de reconceitualização da noção original da esfera pública (Calhoun, 2004; e Antony e Thomas, 2010).

Nesse contexto, o presente trabalho propõe-se a analisar a utilização dos novos media num dos momentos fundamentais do processo político que potencia a participação dos cidadãos – as campanhas eleitorais – com o intuito de verificar se representou a criação de um novo espaço público de debate e uma via de comunicação direta entre candidato e eleitor. Mais concretamente, tomando por estudo de caso as recentes campanhas eleitorais no Brasil (2010) e em Portugal (2011), pretende-se determinar o papel do *Twitter* quer no estabelecimento ou revitalização da esfera pública quer, em alternativa, como um novo suporte ou plataforma para as antigas estratégias de propaganda eleitoral.

Assim sendo, o artigo está dividido em cinco secções. Na primeira é proposta uma aproximação sumária ao conceito de esfera pública desde a sua conceptualização original até às redefinições mais recentes resultantes do ecossistema virtual. De seguida, o impacto das redes sociais no âmbito particular das campanhas eleitorais é enquadrado na literatura existente servindo, juntamente com a secção anterior, de alpendra para a formulação da questão de investigação que preside ao estudo, bem como, as



respectivas hipóteses associadas. Na terceira seção são abordadas as questões do foro metodológico que antecedem a análise dos resultados propriamente dita. Por fim, as implicações das conclusões do presente estudo são consideradas e o argumento proposto avançado.

## A esfera pública revisitada na era digital.

O conceito de esfera pública foi celebrado por Habermas, enquanto domínio da vida social em que algo semelhante à opinião pública é formado e o no seio do qual o acesso a todos os cidadãos é garantido (Habermas, 1989). Entendido originalmente como uma fase ou era histórica ao invés de uma ferramenta para avaliar a comunicação e os media, a cerne da concepção de Habermas centrava-se na democracia política e de que forma as suas normas estavam a ser ameaçadas pelos acontecimentos históricos e pelas forças sociais. Nessa altura, os princípios da esfera pública pressupunham uma discussão argumentativa aberta dos assuntos de interesse geral da sociedade com o intuito de alcançar um consenso. Para tal, seria necessária a existência de algumas liberdades, a saber: a de expressão, de participação tanto no debate público como no processo decisório, bem como, a de imprensa associada às anteriores (Ibidem).

Apesar de constituir um valoroso ponto de partida, a proposta habermasiana foi, no entanto, tida como incompleta e objecto de algumas reformulações desde então. Começou por ser adoptado como padrão normativo de avaliação das estruturas comunicacionais existentes nas sociedades contemporâneas ou na tentativa de o aplicar a instâncias concretas da comunicação, mais especificamente às constelações de poder e padrões comunicacionais que fortalecem ou enfraquecem a democracia (Dahlgren, 2009). Outra das derivações que sofreu, foi no sentido de contrapor a existência de múltiplas esferas públicas (Asen & Brouwer, 2001; Dahlgren, 2001; Fraser, 1992) ou do somatório de várias pequenas esferas públicas mutantes (Gitlin, 1998).

Com o advento da internet, por fim, sofreu novos aprimoramentos e derivações. Alguns autores preconizam a ideia de uma esfera pública virtual de pleno direito (Lévy, 2002; Castells, 2001). Outros, porém, defendem que a internet não alcançou tal estatuto, devendo ao invés ser entendida como espaço virtual facilitador da renovação da esfera pública (Kellner, 1999; Moore, 1999; Noveck, 1999; Slevin, 2000; Papacharissi, 2002) ou de uma democracia do ciberespaço que, para além de promover o debate democrático a uma multiplicidade de vozes, também fomenta a participação política (Dahberg, 2001; Barbara Warnick, 2007; Diana Carlin et al., 2005; Victor Pickard, 2006; Steffen Albrecht, 2006; e Khan e Kellner, 2004). Dito de outra forma, a internet contribuiu para a ampliação das margens políticas da esfera pública (Carvalho e Casanova, 2010).

Convirá ressaltar a este propósito, que no âmbito deste estudo, o *Twitter* (à semelhança das demais ferramentas online) é entendido não como esfera pública virtual

*per si* mas enquanto espaço de conversa e debate de questões de interesse público, sem pretensões deliberativas e decisórias (antes informativas), oferecendo oportunidade de participação a vozes marginais ou ausentes com a possibilidade de reciprocidade (Allan, 2003).

De fato, uma das facetas marcantes dos novos media, e das redes sociais em particular, - a da contribuir para a diversidade da esfera pública - é perceptível não só a nível dos participantes mas também em termos dos tópicos e estilos adoptados. Tal diversidade, logicamente deveria resultar em heterogeneidade a ponto de muitas vezes ser difícil determinar o foco político.

Não obstante essa virtude da internet em termos da revitalização da esfera pública, frequentemente colocam-se dúvidas sobre a funcionalidade (Dahlberg, 2001; Palczewski, 2001; Papacharissi, 2002; Poster, 1999) e a qualidade dessa interacção no âmbito do comentário político (Chadwick, 2006). Na verdade, apesar da diversidade de opinião ser um dos atrativos da discussão política online (Stromer-Galley, 2003), não raro redundam em discussões acaloradas e de natureza indelicada ou insultuosa (Katz, 1997). Ainda assim, possibilitam que os cidadãos sejam mais sinceros e directos (Papacharissi, 2004) com uma influência revigorante da democracia em função da disseminação de ideias críticas e progressivas (Kellner, 1998).

Outra das propaladas virtudes da internet prende-se com a possibilidade de potenciar uma maior participação e pro-actividade dos cidadãos no processo político. Das principais formas de participação - voto, acções de campanha, contacto com detentores de cargos de poder, actividades comunitárias, protesto e contestação, e por fim, activismo cibernético (visitar sites, enviar ou re-encaminhar emails) - os cidadãos tendem a escolher as que mais de coadunam com as suas motivações e objectivos e por norma também exercem influências distintas no processo político (Dalton, 2008:33-34).

O grau e natureza da participação no processo político dependem de outros dois factores co-relacionados: o envolvimento e a interactividade. O primeiro é tido como um pré-requisito da participação e fundamental para a realização de alguma actividade envolvendo laços cívicos (Dahlgren, 2009). No caso da interactividade, pressupõe para além do estabelecimento do contacto, a troca de informações (Bimber e Davis, 2003) e a existência de feedback dos políticos aos comentários dos cidadãos, algo também designado de estratégia relacional (Martin e Geiger, 1999).

## As campanhas eleitorais digitais.

A internet oferece a possibilidade de desempenhar as actividades tradicionais de campanha: conectar-se com pessoas dispersas, coligir e partilhar informação, e tentar influenciar o processo político (Bimber e Davis, 2003). Na verdade, alguns autores postulam que a internet representa também a ruptura com velhos paradigmas nas

campanhas políticas e a possibilidade de os políticos conseguirem superar as principais críticas do eleitorado, a saber: o distanciamento entre o eleitor e o candidato, a falta de diálogo com os votantes e a ausência de propostas direccionadas para cada segmento da sociedade (Canavilhas, 2009; Graeff, 2009; e Garcia, 2010). Com esse intuito, os recursos da era digital possibilitam oportunidades sem precedentes sobretudo enquanto ferramenta instrumental de envolvimento e de mobilização.

Para que tal se verifique, no entanto, as estruturas online deverão conter funcionalidades que permitam tal interacção (Foot e Schneider, 2004), o que nem sempre se verifica ou, noutros casos, tais recursos ainda que disponibilizados não são verdadeiramente explorados (Novais e Barcelos, 2010).

A utilização da Internet como ferramenta de campanha remonta às presidenciais norte-americanas de 2000, quando foi empregue de forma percursora pelo então senador John McCain. Mas o primeiro a utilizá-la como ferramenta de diálogo numa campanha foi Howard Dean, pré-candidato democrata nas eleições presidenciais norte-americanas de 2004. Mais tarde, atingiria o seu clímax quando utilizada de forma ainda mais bem sucedida enquanto canal viável e privilegiado com os eleitores, e instrumento de mobilização e de angariação de fundos aquando da eleição de Barack Obama (Graeff, 2009).

Convirá referir que a utilização da internet no âmbito das campanhas teve *timings* distintos no Brasil e em Portugal. Aliás, tal desfasamento ainda se verificava nas mais recentes eleições presidenciais nos dois países. Enquanto no caso brasileiro as presidenciais de 2010 foram as primeiras eleições em que os candidatos puderam lançar mão de todos os recursos disponíveis na Web, no caso português, os candidatos já utilizavam esses recursos desde 2003. No entanto, importa ressaltar que nos actos eleitorais precedentes às presidenciais de 2011 - designadamente as legislativas, europeias e autárquicas de 2009 - o uso da Internet tinha sido muito tímido, especialmente no que se refere às redes sociais (Novais, 2011).

Ainda assim, havia a expectativa de que as redes sociais, e o Twitter em particular, assumissem um papel importante nas eleições dos dois países em vista do *l'air du temps*, isto é, da inevitabilidade da sua utilização dado serem tão preponderantes junto dos cidadãos e sob pena de serem considerados retrógrados se não o fizessem.

Mas não sem distinções entre as realidades específicas de cada país. As redes sociais, assumiram um papel significativo nas presidenciais portuguesas de 2011 e confirmaram uma maior intimidade com a Web 2.0 por parte dos candidatos, comparativamente com eleições anteriores, e preocupados em marcar presença nas principais redes sociais: *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Youtube* e *Flickr*.<sup>1</sup> Já no Brasil, o que se verificou no geral foi que nem todos os relacionamentos dos candidatos com as redes

<sup>1</sup>Jornal de Notícias: Presidenciais 2.0: Quem ganhou nas redes? Disponível em: [http://www.jn.pt/blogs/nosnarede/archive/2011/02/07/presidenciais-2-0.aspx?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=facebook](http://www.jn.pt/blogs/nosnarede/archive/2011/02/07/presidenciais-2-0.aspx?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=facebook) acedido em 7/2/2011.

sociais foram cordatos. A candidata do PT a presidência da república, por exemplo, afirmou por diversas vezes que estava a ser vítima de uma campanha difamatória e anónima, por meio da Internet e das redes sociais. Tais queixas petistas foram confirmadas pelo Observatório das Eleições 2010, cujo levantamento revelou que a candidata Dilma Rousseff foi quem mais recebeu ataques nas redes sociais, especialmente no *Twitter*<sup>2</sup>.

Nesse contexto da centralidade dos novos media na questão da esfera pública e nas campanhas, o objectivo deste trabalho consistia em determinar o nível de participação dos eleitores e de interatividade com os candidatos tendo como suporte as *timelines* no *Twitter* dos dois favoritos à presidência no Brasil (José Serra e Dilma Rousseff) e em Portugal (Manuel Alegre e Cavaco Silva). Desse modo, pretendia-se aferir o papel da mais popular ferramenta de microblogging enquanto revitalizador da esfera pública, no sentido de possibilitar uma via de comunicação direta e recíproca entre o candidato e os eleitores, ou apenas como instrumento da estratégia de propaganda eleitoral desconsiderando as potencialidades interactivas do *Twitter*.

Na prossecução da questão central de investigação deste trabalho foram formuladas as seguintes hipóteses relacionadas com as expectativas iniciais:

1. As presidências de 2010 no Brasil e de 2011 em Portugal serão marcadas por um nível de participação reduzida nos *Twitters* oficiais dos principais candidatos eleitorais.
2. Apesar de disponíveis, as funcionalidades de interacção não serão plenamente exploradas pelos candidatos que tenderão a privilegiar as facetas comunicacionais possibilitadas pelo *Twitter*.

Antes de encetar a análise que permite verificar as expectativas que presidiram à investigação, impõe-se a clarificação das escolhas metodológicas.

## Questões metodológicas.

Depois da protagonismo dos blogues e do facebook em actos eleitorais anteriores, no presente trabalho procurou-se aferir o impacto do *Twitter* nas mais recentes eleições presidenciais no Brasil e em Portugal. A escolha do *Twitter* residiu no facto de se tratar da mais popular ferramenta de microblogging, baseada na transmissão de comentários breves e rápidos de 140 caracteres (ou menos) que combina facetas dos blogues, das mensagens de texto e do broadcasting, com imenso potencial de ser utilizada no domínio político. Criado em 2006, o *Twitter* rapidamente deixou de ser o *app du jour* para se converter em algo corriqueiro na vida diária de um número

<sup>2</sup>Carta Capital, edição de 22-09-2010, p. 38/40.

exponencial de utilizadores. Para além da popularidade, o *Twitter* tem registado um aumento da sua notoriedade através da divulgação em 2009 dos detalhes da amargem no Rio Hudson ou dos protesto no Irão (Beaumont, 2009 citado por Arceneaux e Weiss, 2010).

Tal esforço comparativo transnacional entre os dois principais candidatos a presidência da república no Brasil e em Portugal, para além de raro e desejável (Pfetsch and Esser, 2004) é também revelador da utilização do *Twitter*, nas campanhas eleitorais em contextos marcadamente distintos: em termos económicos, culturais, e dos próprios sistemas político e mediático, bem como, com tradições diferenciadas no recurso às ferramentas online, no que se refere às estratégias de campanha. Nesse sentido, a análise pretendeu abordar o nível de participação e interatividade candidato/eleitor tendo como suporte as *timelines* constantes nos *Twitters* oficiais de José Serra, Dilma Rousseff, Manuel Alegre e Cavaco Silva nos dez últimos dias de campanha da primeira volta das respectivas eleições presidenciais.

A metodologia adoptada neste estudo consiste na combinação de análise de conteúdo quantitativa e qualitativa. No que concerne a primeira focalizou-se na contabilização dos seguidores registados, bem como, na quantidade de mensagens publicadas tanto pelos candidatos como pelos seguidores. No que diz respeito à vertente mais qualitativa da análise, concentrou-se numa apreciação da natureza dos *tweets* com conteúdo informacional ou conversacional (diálogo com os eleitores), numa adaptação da proposta original de Recuero e Zago (2009). O item informacional, por sua vez, foi subdividido em mensagens pessoais (aquelas que tratavam de temas não ligados a campanha ou a política, com linguagem mais informal e espontânea) notícias (que referiam a campanha eleitoral) opinativas e *links*. Já o item conversacional foi subdividido em mensagens diretas e indiretas dos candidatos e dos seguidores. O *tweet* foi classificado como direto quando o candidato responde diretamente a um seguidor seja utilizando “@” ou não, e como indireto quando o candidato publicou uma mensagem direccionada a todos os seus seguidores, mas com o intuito de fomentar debate ou respostas (por exemplo, uma pergunta).

## Resultados.

### Análise quantitativa.

A campanha oficial para a primeira volta das eleições presidenciais brasileiras teve início no dia 6 de julho de 2010 e encerrou-se no dia 30 de setembro de 2010. Nesse período, foram analisadas as *timelines* dos dois principais candidatos à presidência da república, José Serra e Dilma Rousseff.

No final da primeira volta, o candidato José Serra possuía 457 853 seguidores no *Twitter*, enquanto a candidata Dilma Rousseff possuía 237 000. Em números absolutos

Candidatos	Seguidores
Dilma Russef	237 000
José Serra	457 853
Cavaco Silva	1 350
Manuel Alegre	815

**Tabela 1:** Seguidores dos candidatos no Twitter.

o percentual de seguidores dos dois candidatos é muito alto. Mas, comparados com o número de eleitores brasileiros – cerca de 135 milhões – os números são ainda residuais.

Conforme se infere da grelha acima, a situação em Portugal, não se mostrou muito diferente. Também naquele país as *timelines* dos dois principais candidatos a presidência da república Cavaco Silva e Manuel Alegre foram analisadas durante dez dias (11 a 21 de janeiro de 2011), os últimos da campanha oficial.

No final da primeira volta, o candidato Manuel Alegre possuía 815 seguidores no *Twitter*, enquanto o candidato Cavaco Silva registava 1 350. Os números não deixam dúvida de que os candidatos não conseguiram atrair muitos seguidores. Levando em consideração o número de eleitores portugueses cadastrados, cerca de 9 400 000, os candidatos não conseguiram alcançar nem 1% do eleitorado. Vale destacar que desse percentual de eleitores, cerca de 50% possui acesso a Internet de suas residências, o que justifica em parte a pouca penetração. Mas de fato, Manuel Alegre atraiu apenas 0,008% dos eleitores para seu *Twitter* e Cavaco Silva apenas 0,014%.

O pequeno número de seguidores comparado ao número de eleitores deixa claro que o *Twitter* apesar da sua popularidade não foi um veículo primordial de comunicação política nas últimas campanhas presidenciais do Brasil e em Portugal.

Outros dois critérios de análise utilizados foram o número de mensagens publicadas pelo candidato e o número de mensagens publicadas por seus seguidores.

Candidatos	Mensagens dos candidatos	Mensagens dos seguidores
Dilma Russef	11	09
José Serra	102	60
Cavaco Silva	38	01
Manuel Alegre	59	01

**Tabela 2:** Mensagens postadas no Twitter.

No período de análise, o candidato José Serra postou 102 mensagens no *Twitter*, enquanto Dilma publicou 11. Já Manuel Alegre postou 59 *tweets*, com uma média diária de 4,7 *tweets*, enquanto seu adversário, Cavaco Silva, publicou 38 mensagens,

com uma média de 3,5 *tweets* por dia. Os candidatos portugueses deram maior atenção ao *Twitter* às vésperas da eleição, a maior parte das mensagens foram publicadas no último dia de campanha oficial, 21 de janeiro.

Os dados extraídos do quadro de análise comprovam que de todos os candidatos José Serra utilizou de maneira mais constante o *Twitter*. Também os seguidores do candidato do PSDB foram mais participativos, postaram 60 mensagens, por contraposição às 9 da candidata Dilma Rousseff. No entanto em termos proporcionais, equanto a quantidade de *tweets* postados pelos seguidores ultrapassa em pouco a metade dos emitidos por José Serra (58%), no caso de Dilma o montante sobe para os 82%.

A análise da atividade dos candidatos brasileiros no *Twitter* pelo site *Tweetstats* corrobora as informações coletadas, no sentido de que o candidato José Serra utilizou mais o microblog em comparação a candidata petista. José Serra postou 276 *tweets* no mês, uma média diária de 10.6 *tweets*. Já a candidata Dilma Rousseff publicou apenas 32 mensagens no mês, uma média diária de 1,5 *tweets*.

No geral, os dados validam a hipótese 1 deste estudo no sentido de confirmar a participação reduzida nos *Twitters* oficiais dos principais candidatos eleitorais nas presidências de 2010 no Brasil e de 2011 em Portugal.

### Análise qualitativa.

Num segundo momento, foi realizada uma análise de pendore mais qualitativo de todo o material com o intuito de aprofundar o conteúdo das mensagens publicadas na *timeline* dos candidatos - quer as postadas pelo próprio quer pelos seguidores. Desta forma, as mensagens foram classificadas de acordo com dois critérios distintivos: informacional e conversacional.

Candidatos	Pessoais		Notícias		Opinativos		Links	
	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%
Dilma Rousseff	2	15%	9	69%	1	8%	1	8%
José Serra	14	11,4%	52	42%	4	3,3%	53	42,3%
Cavaco Silva	0	0%	38	50,7%	0	0%	37	49,3%
Manuel Alegre	1	0,9%	58	51,3%	0	0%	54	47,8%

**Tabela 3:** Natureza do tweets: Informacionais.

No que se refere ao candidato José Serra foram contabilizadas 105 mensagens, consideradas informacionais, no período de 20 a 30 de setembro de 2010. Verifica-se que o candidato deu maior ênfase às mensagens que tinham como conteúdo o programa de governo, a agenda de campanha, os assuntos relacionados à política

nacional, bem como os links para vídeos de campanha e fotos. Ou seja, José Serra priorizou a visibilidade.

Por outro lado, a candidata petista, Dilma Rousseff, utilizou menos o *microblogging*, durante todo o período de análise foram postadas 11 mensagens em sua página no *Twitter*, sendo que a maioria delas tinham como objetivo divulgação de agenda de campanha 69%.

Das 59 mensagens postadas na página do candidato Manuel Alegre 50% referia-se a agenda de campanha, o programa de governo ou as questões políticas de relevância nacional que eram objeto de debate no tempo de antena à época. Dessas mensagens 49% possuíam links para fotos e vídeos do candidato em momentos da campanha. Por exemplo, no dia 18 de janeiro às vésperas da eleição, quase todos as mensagens publicadas pelo candidato referiam-se a agenda de campanha. O candidato utilizou a ferramenta basicamente como plataforma para a propaganda eleitoral veiculada em outros veículos como *Youtube*, *Facebook* ou site oficial (*Manuelalegre2011.com*). No dia 11 de janeiro todos os *posts* do candidato remetem para vídeos no *Youtube*, ou material de campanha publicado na sua página oficial. Durante o período de análise foi postada apenas um mensagem de cunho pessoal, no dia 17/01, quando o candidato se solidariza com as vítimas das chuvas no Rio de Janeiro.

O desempenho do candidato Cavaco Silva no *Twitter* não foi muito diferente de seu adversário. A maior parte das mensagens publicadas (59,7%) foram contabilizadas como notícias que remetiam a agenda de campanha ou diziam respeito a posição política do candidato sobre algum tema de relevância nacional.

Em virtude da grande quantidade de mensagens com links para sites, redes sociais, fotos e notícias, entendeu-se por bem criar uma grelha especificamente para a subcategoria link.

Candidatos	Links sites		Links redes sociais		Links notícias		Links fotos	
Dilma Russef	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
José Serra	20	37,5%	10	18,9%	0	0%	23	43,4%
Cavaco Silva	4	10,8%	31	83,8%	0	0%	2	5,4%
Manuel Alegre	33	61,1%	21	38,9%	0	0%	0	0%

**Tabela 4:** Links constantes nos tweets.

A grelha acima não deixa dúvidas de que especialmente os candidatos portugueses utilizaram o microblog, como trampolim para suas páginas oficiais e para outras redes sociais. Os candidatos buscaram aumentar a sua visibilidade e reforçar as mensagens já publicadas nos seus sites, ou ao tempo de antena que foi disponibilizado no *Youtube*.

No que se refere ao item conversacional (ver quadro 5), José Serra foi o único



candidato que utilizou o espaço no *Twitter* para responder às perguntas e mensagens de seus seguidores, uma vez que postou 43 mensagens com menções diretas a algum seguidor.

No entanto, vale mencionar que foram contabilizados 60 posts com mensagens de seguidores com perguntas ou manifestações de apoio, ou seja, o candidato não respondeu a todas as mensagens que foram mantidas na sua *timeline*.

Candidatos	Pessoais		Notícias		Opinativos		Links	
	Direto	Candidato	Indireto	Candidato	Direto	Seguidor	Indireto	Seguidor
Dilma Russef	1	10%	1	10%	1	10%	7	70%
José Serra	43	39%	4	4%	38	36%	22	21%
Cavaco Silva	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Manuel Alegre	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%

**Tabela 5:** Natureza do tweets: Conversacionais.

Apesar de muito tímida, em vista do pequeno número de *replies* aos seus seguidores, a iniciativa foi muito bem recebida pelo eleitorado que na última semana de campanha colocou o *#pergunteaoserra* no topo do *trends* Brasil, um ranking de expressões mais repetidas no *Twitter*. A receptividade do candidato e a disposição de atender o eleitorado, aparentemente despertou o interesse dos cidadãos em participar, perguntar, comentar, o que evidentemente demonstra a potencialidade da ferramenta quando bem explorada.

O desempenho dos candidatos Dilma Rousseff, Cavaco Silva e Manuel Alegre foi ainda mais desanimador. A candidata brasileira, por exemplo, só respondeu a apenas uma mensagem dos seguidores. Outro dado interessante quanto ao conteúdo das mensagens analisadas no *Twitter* de Dilma Rousseff é que durante todo o período não foi contabilizada nenhuma pergunta de um seguidor, as demais mensagens publicadas pelos internautas (10%), não tinham como conteúdo perguntas, apenas manifestações de apoio. A petista optou por uma posição neutra no microblogging evitando controvérsias e assuntos polêmicos. No entanto, essa posição suprimiu o que há de mais típico da plataforma o aspecto conversacional, de debate de troca de ideias em tempo real.

O mesmo ocorreu com os candidatos portugueses, Manuel Alegre, não deu nenhuma prioridade para o carácter conversacional da ferramenta. Durante o período de análise foi publicada apenas uma mensagem indireta de um seguidor e nenhuma mensagem direta ou indireta do candidato com conteúdo conversacional. Também

não foi contabilizada nenhuma mensagem de caráter conversacional na timeline do candidato Cavaco Silva.

A falta de interação candidato/eleitor perpetuou-se durante toda a campanha. Analisando as mensagens não se verificou nenhuma tentativa de abertura de diálogo, de um espaço para que os cidadãos pudessem esclarecer dúvidas sobre as propostas do candidato a reeleição. Durante todo o período de análise não foi contabilizada nenhuma mensagem conversacional. Assim, como Manuel Alegre, Cavaco Silva privilegiou uma comunicação estática, unidirecional e sem interatividade. Os candidatos utilizaram o *Twitter* como um folhetim eletrónico, mantendo a lógica das plataformas tradicionais de comunicação: um emissor para vários receptores.

Por fim, outros dos parâmetros analisados prendeu-se com o tom das mensagens postadas pelos seguidores nos *Twitters* dos candidatos.

Candidatos	Positivas	Negativas	Neutras
Dilma Russef	9	0	0
José Serra	9	0	0
Cavaco Silva	9	0	0
Manuel Alegre	9	0	0

**Tabela 6:** Tom das mensagens postadas pelos seguidores no Twitter.

De acordo com o quadro de análise acima, verifica-se que 100% das mensagens foram positivas ou neutras, uma vez que não foi contabilizada nenhuma mensagem negativa. Na verdade, o que se pode deduzir é que os candidatos não responderam a mensagens agressivas ou de conteúdo crítico. Eles simplesmente as ignoraram. Assim, para não se ter uma conclusão falsa de que todos os tweets foram positivos ou neutros, prefere-se afirmar que todas as mantidas pelos candidatos em suas *timelines* foram positivos ou neutros. Eles não concederam espaço a críticas ou agressões.

Deste modo, os resultados da análise qualitativa acima apresentados comprovam que os candidatos presidenciais portugueses e brasileiros privilegiaram as funcionalidades comunicacionais *Twitter* em detrimento das conversacionais relacionadas com a interatividade, conforme enunciado na hipótese 2.

## Conclusão.

Apesar de constituir um dos maiores avanços tecnológicos com consideráveis implicações na democracia moderna e no desenvolvimento da comunicação política (Dahlgren, 2005), a Internet não conseguiu cumprir as promessas de se converter numa nova esfera pública, ou de resgatar a participação política e a confiança nas ins-

tuições políticas por parte dos cidadãos (Gibson e tal., 2000; Gomes, 2005; Cardos, 2006; e Papacharissi 2002).

No contexto do presente estudo verificou-se que embora os candidatos tenham recorrido à Internet e às redes sociais nas suas campanhas de forma mais ostensiva do que nas últimas eleições, perpetuaram-se algumas tendências anteriores. Sobreretudo, no que diz respeito à falta de interactividade ou de diálogo entre o candidato e o eleitor, que sendo a principal faceta diferenciadora proporcionada pelas redes sociais (Gomes, 2005; Recuero e Zago, 2009; Garcia, 2010; e Comm, 2010) não foi, contudo, rentabilizada (Smith 1999; e Chadwick e May, 2003). De fato, apenas o candidato brasileiro José Serra, e de forma despretensiosa, abriu espaço para o diálogo e a interatividade no respectivo microblogue, respondendo a perguntas dos seguidores, trocando opiniões com seguidores e acólitos.

Em contrapartida, aquilo que se verificou em ambas as eleições brasileiras e portuguesas foi que os candidatos privilegiaram o *Twitter* para divulgação das suas agendas e propostas com o intuito de aumentar a sua visibilidade, preterindo ou desperdiçando o potencial conversacional proporcionado pelo microblogue (Recuero e Zago, 2009). Na verdade, as mais recentes eleições presidências no Brasil e em Portugal revelaram uma utilização selectiva do *Twitter* como um trampolim para as páginas no *Facebook* ou para os respectivos sites oficiais dos candidatos, reveladora de que Internet foi tratada como uma plataforma adicional para as práticas habituais do universo *offline* (Canavilhas, 2009; Graeff, 2009).

Tal constatação têm duas implicações fundamentais dignas de revelo. Por um lado confirma a tendência de convergência das técnicas e estratégias de campanha no que respeita a utilização dos novos media em países pertencentes a diferentes sistemas políticos e mediáticos. Por outro lado, tem consequências em termos da vitalidade e legitimidade na esfera pública, uma vez que a maioria dos eleitores desperdiçaram a oportunidade de participar no espaço de conversa e debate digital proporcionado pelo *Twitter*, e sempre que o fizeram, não houve interacção dado que os candidatos os deixaram sem resposta e a falar sozinhos.

## Referências Bibliográficas

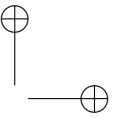
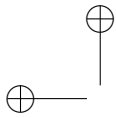
- ALBRECHT, Steffen, "Whose voice is heard in online deliberation? A study of participation and representation in political debates on the Internet." *Information, Communication & Society*, 9(1), págs. 62-82, 2006.
- ALLAN, STUART, Mediating citizenship: online journalism and the public sphere new voices. *Development*, v. 46, n. 1, p. 30-40, 2003.
- ANTONY, Mary Grace e THOMAS, Ryan. 'This is citizen journalism at its finest':

- YouTube and the public sphere in the Oscar Grant shooting, *New Media & Society*, 12(8), págs. 1280-96, 2010.
- ARCENEUX, Noah e WRISS, Amy Schmitz, 'Seems stupid until you try it: press coverage of Twitter, 2006-9', *New Media & Society*, Vol. 12(8), págs. 1262-1279, 2010.
- ASEM, Robert e BROUWER, Daniel, *Counterpublics and the state*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- BIMBER, Bruce e DAVIS, Richard, *Campaigning online: The Internet in U. S. Elections*, Oxford:Oxford University Press 2003
- CALHOUN, Craig (2004). "Information technology and the international public sphere." In Douglas Schuler and Peter Day (Eds.), *Shaping the Network Society: The New Role of Civil Society in Cyberspace*. 229-251. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- CANAVILHAS, João. *A Comunicação Política na era da Internet*. Portugal: Universidade da Beira Interior, 2009. Disponível em <http://www.bocc.uff.br/pag/canavilhas-joao-comunicacao-politica-na-era-pdf>, acessado em 10 de Janeiro de 2010.
- CARLIN, Diana, Dan SCHILL, David LEVASSEUS, and Anthony KING (2005). "The post-9/11 public sphere: citizen talk about the 2004 presidential debates" *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 8(4), 617-638.
- CARVALHO, Tiago. & CASANOVA, José Luís. L. *Esfera pública, democracia e internet: os bloggers em Portugal*. Portugal: Observatorio Journal: 2010, vol.4 - nº2, 091-118.
- CASTELLS, Manuel, *The internet galaxy*. Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2001.
- CHADWICK, Andrew. *Internet Politics – States, citizens, and new communication technologies*.Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- CHADWICK, Andrew e MAY, Christopher, 'Interaction Between States and Citizens in the Age of the Internet: "E-Government" in the United States, Britain and the European Union', *Governance*, 16 (2), págs. 271-300, 2003.
- CARDOSO, António Magalhães. *A Comunicação Política na Internet. Análise dos websites dos Partidos Políticos em Itália*. Portugal, Observatório Journal: 2008, vol. 7, 180-204.
- COMM, Jhon. *O Poder do Twiter – Estratégias para dominar seu mercado e atingir seus objetivos com um tweet por vez*. São Paulo: Gente, 2009.

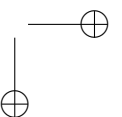
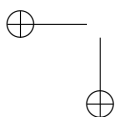
- DAHLBERG, Lincoln., "Computer-Mediated Communication and the Public Sphere: A Critical Analysis, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communications* 7(1): 2001 disponível em <http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol7/issue1/dahlberg.html>, consultado em 22 de Fevereiro de 2011.
- DAHLGREN, Peter, *Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication, and Democracy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009
- DAHLGREN, Peter. *The Internet, public spheres, and political communication: Dispersion and Deliberation*. Reino Unido: Political Communication, 2005, vol. 22, 147-162.
- DALTON, Russell, Citizenship Norms and the Expansion of Political Participation *Political Studies*, 56 (1): 76-98, 2008
- ESSER, Frank. & PFETSCH, Barbara. *Comparing Political Communication: theories, cases, and challenges*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- FOOT, Kirsten e SCHNEIDER, Steven, Online structure for civic engagement in the post-9/11 Web sphere. *Electronic Journal of Communication*, 14(3-4), 2004 disponível em <http://www.cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/014/3/01435.html>, consultado em 11 de fevereiro de 2011.
- FRASER, Nancy. *Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy: In C. Calhoun (Ed.). Habermans and the public sphere*. Boston:MIT Press, 1992, 109-142.
- GÁRCIA, Ana María Álvarez. *Principales efectos y ventajas del uso de las nuevas tecnologías en campañas electorales*. CIC Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación: 2010, vol. 15, 55-84. Disponível em <http://revistas.ucm.es/inf/11357991/articulos/CIYC1010110055A.PDF>, consultado em 11 de fevereiro de 2011.
- GEIGER, Susi and MARTIN, Shane, The internet as a relationship marketing tool - Evidence from Irish Companies, *Irish Marketing Review*, 12 (2):24-36,1999.
- GIBSON, Rachel, HOWARD, Philip e WARD, Stephen. *Social Capital, Internet Connectedness & Political Participation: A Four-Country Study*. Canada: International Political Science Association, 2000. Disponível em <http://scholar.google.com.br/scholar?q=Social>, consultado em 4 de abril de 2011
- GITLIN, Todd (1998) 'Public Sphere or Public Sphericules?', in Tamar Liebes and James Curran (eds) *Media, Ritual and Identity*, London: Routledge, págs: 168-174, 1998.

- GOMES, Wilson. *A democracia digital e o problema da participação civil na decisão política*. Brasil: Revista Fronteiras – estudos midiáticos, 2005, volume VII (3), 214-222.
- GRAEFF, Antônio. *Eleições 2.0: a internet e as mídias sociais no processo eleitoral*. São Paulo: Publifolha, 2009.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (trans T. Burger with E Lawrence). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (trans W. Rehg). Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
- JACOBS, Ronald. *Race, Media, and the Crisis of Civil Society: From Watts to Rodney King*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- KATZ, Jon. Birth of a digital nation. *Wired*, 5(4), págs. 49-52, 1997
- KHAN, Richard and KELLNER, Douglas “New media and Internet activism: from the ‘battle of Seattle’ to blogging.” *New Media & Society*, 6(1), págs. 77-95, 2004.
- KELLNER, Douglas. Globalisation from below? Toward a radical democratic technopolitics. *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 4(2), págs. 101-113, 1999.
- KELLNER, Douglas. Intellectuals, the new public spheres, and techno-politics. In C. Toulouse & T. W. Luke (Eds.), *The politics of cyberspace: A new political science reader*. New York: Routledge, , págs. 167-186, 1998.
- LÉVY, Pierre, *Cyberdémocratie*. Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 2002.
- MOORE, Richard. Democracy and cyberspace. In B. N. Hague & B. D. Loader (Eds.), *Digital democracy: Discourse and decision making in the information age* (págs. 39-59). London: Routledge, 1999.
- NOVAIS, Rui Alexandre, ‘Traditional or new media: Who calls the shots during the campaigns?’, comunicação apresentada no âmbito da 2011 MPSA National Conference, Chicago, EUA, 2011.
- NOVAIS, Rui Alexandre, e Barcellos, Alice “Online communication in the 2009 Campaigns”, comunicação apresentada na conferência IAMCR de 2010, Braga, Portugal, 2010.

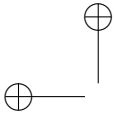
- NOVECK, Beth, Transparent space: Law, technology and deliberative democracy in the information society. In C. Kratx (ed), *Cuddltural values* (págs..472-492). Cambridge: Blackwell, 1999
- PALCZEWSKI, Catherine, Cyber-movements, new social movements, and counter-publics. In R. Asen & D. Brouwer (Eds.), *Counterpublics and the State* (pp. 161-186). New York: State University of New York, 2001
- PAPACHARISSI, Zizi. *The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere*. London: New Media & Society, 2002, vol. 4, 9-27.
- PAPACHARISSI, Zizi. *Democracy Online: Civility, Politeness and the Democratic Potential of Online Political Discussion Groups*. London: New Media & Society, 2004, vol. 6, 259-283.
- PICKARD, Victor W. (2006). "Assessing the radical democracy of indymedia: discursive, technical, and institutional constructions." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23 (1), 19-38.
- POSTER, Mark. The net as a public sphere. In D. Crowley & P. Heyer (Eds.), *Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society*. London: Longman, 1999.
- RECUERO, Raquel. & ZAGO, Gabriela. *Em busca das "redes que importam" – Redes Sociais e Capital Social no Twitter*. São Paulo: Compôs, 2009, 1-16. Disponível em [http://www.compos.org.br/data/trabalhos\\_arquivo\\_coirKgAeuz0ws.pdf](http://www.compos.org.br/data/trabalhos_arquivo_coirKgAeuz0ws.pdf), consultado em 4 de Abril de 2011.
- SANTAELLA, Lúcia. & LEMOS, Renata. *Redes Sociais Digitais: a cognição conectiva do Twitter*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2010.
- SLEVIN, James (2000). *The Internet and Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- SMITH, Marc, Invisible Crowds in Cyberspace: Mapping the Social Structure of the Usenet, In M. A. Smith & P. Kollock (Eds.), *Communities in Cyberspace*, London:Routledge, pág 195-219, 1999.
- STROMER-GALLEY, Jennifer, "On-line interaction and why candidates avoid it." *Journal of Communication*, 50, págs. 111-132, 2000.
- STROMER-GALLEY, Jennifer, Diversity of Political Conversation on the Internet: Users' Perspectives. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 8(3) 2003, disponível em <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol8/issue3/stromergalley.html>, consultado em 11 de Março de 2011.



WARNICK, Barbara (2007). *Rhetoric Online: Persuasion and Politics on the World Wide Web*. Frontiers in Political Communication, Vol. 12. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.







## A public sphere without public(s)? Publics and counterpublics in post-Fordist capitalism.

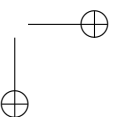
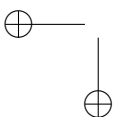
Jernej Prodnik

### **Abstract.**

Author of this text questions conceptualizations of the public sphere that take its existence for granted, without reflecting what in fact constitutes this public discursive field (or public “infrastructure”). It is argued that when considering the idea of the public sphere, it is public(s) that should first and foremost play the crucial role in determining how we understand and characterize it and how it should develop in practice. This epistemological presumption raises an important prerequisite for all more comprehensive debates on the public sphere, as it is the emergence (or eclipse) of public(s) that constitutes fully-working, active, and democratic public sphere. Even though public(s) have largely been ignored in the last two decades this concept has again been gaining in prominence (e.g. Angus, 2001; Gilman-Opalsky, 2008; Hind, 2010), especially with social transformations and bottom-up social developments. This reinvigoration of critical-theoretic discourse was also partially prompted by the new media technologies which opened up possibilities for transnational connections that can possibly influence wider society. Earliest normative approaches regarding the question of the public (and publics) are followed up in this paper, concentrating especially on John Dewey’s (1927/1989) seminal work “The Public and its Problems” and C. Wright Mills’s (1956/2000) “The Power Elite”. This presents a suitable basis to connect them to later developments in theorizing this important concept and for analyzing counterpublics, which were perhaps most notably described by Nancy Fraser (1991), but later-on furthermore developed by several other authors. Author’s reconsideration of the public sphere through focus on publics and counterpublics is theoretically based in the project of alternative modernity (Negri and Hardt, 2009), through which post-modernistic approaches can be rejected, but which also provides foundation through which this concept can be detached from some of the questionable influences of modernistic line of thought. It is claimed that changes and developments in the material basis of society should not be neglected when approaching these issues. This is achieved through contextualization of the Imperial governance and post-Fordist capitalism.

**Keywords:** The public, counterpublics, alternative modernity, post-Fordist capitalism

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices, 273-288*

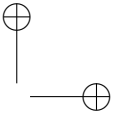
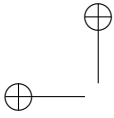


*To form itself, the public has to break existing political forms.* John Dewey (1927/1989: 31)

## Introduction. Bringing the public back in.

Ever since the English translation of the “Structural transformation of the public sphere” by Jürgen Habermas in 1989 there has been a growing interest in the concept of the ‘public sphere’. This attention on the one hand reinvigorated debates about necessary preconditions for democratic life, but on the other hand also produced an important collateral damage: almost complete elimination of the more traditional concept of ‘the public’ from critical-theoretic discourse (Splichal, 2010: 27-29). There are indeed vast differences between concepts of the/a public and the public sphere, even though they are too often neglected. While the former is a social category or collectivity whose members act, form, and express opinions - and into which someone falls due to their specific characteristics - the latter is only a specific sphere, domain, or imagined space of social life, basically an infrastructure (i.e. the system) that enables formation of the public (i.e. one of the system’s components) (ibid.; Splichal, 1999: 1.ch.). According to Splichal (2010: 28) “a public sphere cannot act, it cannot communicate, but a/the public can. The public sphere is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a/the public to emerge.”

Epistemological shift in theoretical focus toward public sphere is peculiar, as there can be no public sphere without a/the public (and *vice versa*), and is problematic in more than one way; above all because it disregards the basic constitutive part of the public sphere and leads to its de-subjectivisation. These characteristics can be seen as quite symptomatic for societies plagued with vastly increasing social inequalities and insurmountable differences in relations of power. In practice, this material basis often either provides or limits access to both the public sphere and people acting as public persons. This shift in interest can among other reasons be attributed to the fact that discourse on the public sphere was in many cases taken up by reformist line of thought that marginalized and neutralized class divisions and conflicts together with structural antagonisms of capitalist societies. As Hardt (1996, 8) pointed out, “many of these writings contained a new urgency that was based on the realization that the spectre of political impotence, social marginalization, and increased alienation, with their roots in a loss of access to power and participation in public affairs, was somehow related to the functioning of communication and the role of media in contemporary industrialized societies.” Similarly, according to Hind (2010) questions of reform of the media system in this context are often reduced to ‘a matter of journalists doing a better job’, which merely reproduces liberalist line of thought and leaves management



of the media in the hands of private actors, reaffirming the prevailing institutional and social order.<sup>1</sup>

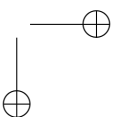
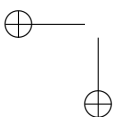
It is argued in this paper that when considering the idea of the public sphere, it is in fact public(s) that should first and foremost play the crucial role in determining how we understand and characterize this sphere. This epistemological restitution can be regarded as the starting-point of this text, while other essential questions gain in prominence with this revision, namely: who are the subjects that form or should be able to form a/the public and what are the prerequisites that need to be fulfilled for this to happen. A need for a full-blown democratic inclusivity is supplemented by basic prerequisite of assuring both equal participation and autonomy for everyone, which at the same time means material contradictions in society cannot be neglected.

The aim of this paper is not to provide a representative overview of different approaches to public sphere, public(s), and counterpublics, which would be an impossible task in this framework. My reconsideration of the public sphere through focus on public(s) will be a short attempt to base these issues: a) in the context of the (global) Imperial governance; and b) in theoretical project of alternative modernity (Negri and Hardt, 2009), through which some of the post-modernist approaches can be consistently rejected, but which also provides a coherent foundation to detach publics from some of the controversial conditions of the modernistic line of thought.

## Early theorizations of the public.

Even though 'the public' has largely been ignored in debates about public sphere this concept has not been completely overlooked. It regained some of its prominence with social changes and bottom-up developments in society, which were accompanied and additionally spurred by the new media technologies that opened up new possibilities for transnational connections and networks that attempted to influence the wider society. Angus (2001), Gilman-Opalsky (2008), and Hind (2010) are only a couple of authors that tried to reinvigorate debates about radical potentials of publics in the last ten years, following conditions of inclusivity and a pressing need for more profound structural reforms in society at large. It is worth noting however that many of these debates have been characterized by a rising confusion in the field, as

<sup>1</sup>Even though several new possibilities opened up by the Internet should not be neglected, overemphasizing potential of the net for somehow reviving democracy and reducing hierarchies is not based on any serious empirical evidence. On the contrary, Hindman's (2009) analysis emphasizes increasing concentration on the Net that even overtops that in 'traditional' media systems. Questions regarding ownership, regulation, and working of both mass and new media therefore remain of crucial importance, especially as we can today mostly talk of an increasingly mediated public sphere (e.g. Dahlgren, 2009; Habermas, 2009). Several authors note that 'media markets' are increasingly concentrated and deregulated and that serious journalism is in crisis (e.g. McChesney, 2007; Dahlgren, 2009).



several theorists often interchanged notions of the public, publics and different public spheres, while the rising discourse on counterpublics and counter-public spheres only further intensified this theoretical vagueness. Only a small minority of authors felt any serious need to coherently clarify all of these concepts that are mostly being used without serious considerations of evident differences in their meaning.

Early (mostly sociological) theorizations of the concept of 'the public' have been a lot more clear-cut, even if there were already significant differences between authors writing on this subject. One can nevertheless discern at least basic characteristics distinctive for the concept of 'the public', according to which it represents an organized collectivity or a specific social group, whose main characteristic is its ability for a critical discourse on matters and issues concerning politics, literature, or art. These critical debates were based on an 'Enlightened' notion of rationality and equality of discussants and were at least formally open to everyone, even though informal restrictions of access were obviously present for social groups that lacked 'intellectual skills' needed for active participation. The public as a social category lacks any kind of formal membership in these conceptualizations and is not based on physical presence but on 'mental-connection' (presumption led by both Gabriel Tarde and Ferdinand Tönnies); because of its focus on issues of public importance it can also hardly be seen as coherent collectivity, its formation is mostly spontaneous, changing in time and space. Because of these preconditions the concept of 'the public' was seen as opposed to dispersed or present crowds - which could perhaps be best characterized by obedience and lack of reflection - and later on in the 20<sup>th</sup> century also to atomized masses of people (the case with theories of Herbert Blumer that followed his observations on the mass media communication). Clearly distinguishing point from these two concepts was public's ability to articulate opinions and criticism (the latter was a key prerequisite of the public for Robert Ezra Park), which was based on rational reflection. An ever present possibility of internally divided opinions was furthermore one of its crucial and distinctive characteristics, even though it was aimed at reaching a consensus in formation of common will and common good. (Splichal, 1999: 7-20)

These early conceptualizations of 'the public' have together with public sphere and public opinion been labeled by some authors as being elitist (e.g. Fraser, 1991; Hardt, 1996; Hind, 2010), especially when taking into account the Habermasian conceptualization of the public sphere as an eminent category of bourgeois society, but also some of the earlier liberal approaches. It is often claimed that normative condition of rationality merely served to legitimize exclusion. Although failing to comprehend obvious differences between normative and empirical arguments, these critiques were in fact correct in noticing that historically speaking certain social classes were almost as a rule excluded from the public sphere, because they were not deemed rational enough to be a part of the public (neither did they have proper material conditions for participation, which was the main reason for exclusion). But setting



certain preconditions in defining main characteristics of the concept of the public can hardly be seen as an elitist approach - especially taking into consideration two of the main authors in this field, John Dewey and Charles Wright Mills, whose theories were inherently critical from the outset. While Dewey's (1927/1989) conceptualization of the public can be considered as radically democratic, Mills (1956/2000) can be credited for developing this subject even further by broadening the scope of inquiry, including wider social conditions in which power-elites were more or less fully in control of how the modern society functions.

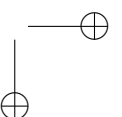
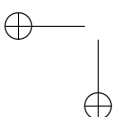
### **Dewey's eclipse of the public and C. Wright Mills's society of masses.**

It is Dewey's (1927/1989) distinction between private and public acts, which can be seen as immensely innovative, that we first turn to. He defined public from private actions by transactions that 'cease to concern only the immediate parties to it'. This means that "the public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for." (ibid. 15-16) With this move, Dewey successfully turned accepted premises of both the public and the state on their head. He removed causal agency generally attributed to them and instead took consequences of actions as the heart of problem and the true reason for the formation of these social categories<sup>2</sup>. Practical implications of this move indicate that what characterizes the public are political (i.e. not intimate as in friendship or family) modes and forms of associated behavior that have significant consequences, expanding 'beyond those directly engaged in producing them' ... And as Dewey furthermore suggests, "consequences have to be taken care of, looked out for. This supervision and regulation cannot be effected by the primary groupings themselves." (ibid. 27) This is how both common interests and the state are 'discovered', if we follow Dewey's argument. Explicating his theory further, we can see that his conceptualization of the public cannot be simply stopped by physical boundaries or national borders; their scope is defined by social issues, problems, questions, and the effects these actions have on people - who should be able to actively respond to (and influence) issues that immediately affect them.

Dewey's theory can be seen as radically democratic, because it assumes that communication and public deliberation are essential parts of participation, and all are necessary parts of democracy. In this context, the public cannot be seen as a solidified

---

<sup>2</sup> Dewey (1927/1989: 33) is also deriving his definition of the state from these premises. For him "the state is the organization of the public effected through officials for the protection of the interests shared by its members."



structure, but rather as being fluid, flexible, always-in-development, and constantly changing in time and space. Or as Dewey himself points out: “in no two ages or places is there the same public. Conditions make the consequences of associated action and the knowledge of them different.” (ibid. 33) Dewey remained pessimistic regarding social reality however, claiming the eclipse of the public, which he saw as lost, asking: “where is the public which these [state] officials are supposed to represent?” (ibid. 117) He was perfectly aware that existing political structures did not represent the public and were merely concerned with making dominant property interests secure. He also knew there were no political agencies that would be worthy of ‘the new age of human relationships’. (ibid. 108-109) But he ultimately failed to engage deeper into these issues.

Questions concerning power-relations in society and their influence the public were a couple of decades later taken up by Charles Wright Mills. In a manner similar to Blumer, Mills (1956/2000) defined public in contrast to mass, both of which represented extreme social (ideal-) types in his theory. Mills pointed out how ‘in official life as in popular folklore’ all political decisions are adopted in the name of the public. The public is according to the classic democratic theory ‘a great apparatus of free discussion’, where authority can only be derived from free discussion, where no group can monopolize discussion, and where ‘each man’s having thought things out for himself and contributes his voice to the great chorus’. The main characteristic of public is its possibility “of answering back, of organizing autonomous organs of public opinion in action [...] The opinion that results from public discussion is understood to be a resolution that is then carried out by public action.” Accordingly, the political process is based on people’s action in this context: “The people are presented with problems. They discuss them. They decide upon them. They formulate viewpoints. These viewpoints are organized, and they compete. One viewpoint ‘wins out’. Then the people act out this view, or their representatives are instructed to act it out, and this they promptly do.” (ibid. 298, 299-300)

For Mills, this description resembled a fairy tale that had nothing to do with reality. Because the issues were not decided by the public at large, this image, promoted by several institutions in society, merely served as a legitimization masquerade. He believed that one of the key preconditions for understanding social life in America was perceiving its transformation from a community of publics toward a society of masses, in which ‘the dominant type of communication is the formal media and publics become mere media markets’. Why this happened can be fully understood only by comprehending how the system of power works in American society; key institutions of modern society were highly hierarchical according to Mills and major power was highly concentrated and resided in economic, political, and military domains. These material economic antagonisms have not diminished in postmodern age and need to

be further addressed to understand the main barriers thwarting possible democratic activities of the public.

### **The coming of Imperial governance.**

One of the crucial characteristics that have accompanied vast structural transformations in the last decades has been a gradual transition from the era of governing, which was grounded in sovereign nation-states, toward postmodern governance based in processes of globalization. According to Stoker (1998), the outputs of governance are not much different from those of government. The main distinction lies in processes that lead to these decisions; they can be delineated especially by the blurring of the boundaries between public and private sectors. For Stoker, “the essence of governance is its focus on governing mechanisms which do not rest on recourse to the authority and sanctions of government,” (ibid. 17) like they did in the case of relatively autonomous nation-states. The main shift happens as several new (especially economic) actors are drawn into decision-making process, where authority is dispersed and interdependence of these actors is established through inter-connected networks of self-governance. Right of decision-making therefore ceases to rest solely on the power of nation-state governments to command or use their authority to produce outcomes; instead, they attempt to use new techniques to steer and guide these processes together with other powerful actors, meaning that the ‘old’ process of governing becomes significantly ‘managed’ and includes different competing interests that influence the final outcome. Even though several private and public actors, most notably transnational corporations, attempted to pressure decision-making processes in their own favor in the past, they could not be seen as forming a constitutive part of these processes - as actively participating in setting the ‘rules of the game’ - like they do in the era of governance. Dispersal of authority which is diffused amongst and new social actors could fabricate an appearance of increased democratization in decision-making, but in practice the opposite is the case; these powerful actors rarely have any democratic legitimacy and often act in opposition to public interests by following particularistic, privately defined goals.

This global transformation was prompted by a complex set of social processes, but perhaps most notably by *economistic* financial globalization, which was followed by constitution of a globally-integrated capitalist market. This can be regarded as a paradigmatic shift that produced qualitative changes in politico-economic terms as it brought about (global) Imperial governance (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 203-233), which set up a complex network of global norms, structures, and authorities that are producing new forms of management, regulation, and control in the global system. Imperial governance according to Negri and Hardt (2009: 225) can be seen as “a process of continual negotiation, an arrangement of instruments for consensual planning and

coordination in which a multiplicity of state and non-state actors with vastly unequal powers work together. And only the collaboration among these actors can determine the processes of policymaking on the global terrain.” These institutions, bodies, actors, and assemblages that are influencing decisions, which have direct consequences on lives of people around the world, can be national, supranational, non-national or even a hybrid mixture; what is of prime importance in this context however is the fact that these processes are not only hindering national sovereignty - which could not be seen as problematic in itself - through oligarchy of powers they are also constructing post-democratic practices of command on the level of global governance, where everything is becoming subsumed under the rule of capital. To put it in different terms: national and local policies and policy-making for example ceases to be a sole question of national states and local authorities, even if in some cases these actors remain of prime importance when defining their content and outcomes. This also means that political decisions, economic changes, and with them future social risks, have largely become global, consequently transforming, influencing, and seriously constraining more local decisions. Hierarchies of power have therefore moved on the global level, in many ways reproducing and expanding C. Wright Mills’s earlier findings.

Processes that led to global imperial governance could be seen as challenging the mere concept of the public, which was in most cases correlated to national states. Gilman-Opalsky’ (2008) attempted to confront this problem with his concept of transgressive publics and public-spheres that challenged the dichotomy of national and transnational frameworks and move beyond it. According to him the concept of transgression is inextricably tied to radical democratic politics, to deepening inclusion, and to forming innovative complex political identities of social movements. He claims that transgressive public spheres have historically been rarely state-bounded and such clinical separation was not possible was mostly fluid; these publics were usually formed by structurally disadvantaged and excluded people that were struggling for equality and inclusion. Gilman-Opalsky’s arguments were pointed both against Habermas’s early theorization of nationally-bounded bourgeois public-sphere and also against transnational public sphere, and can be seen as important contribution to debates looking at alternative approaches regarding questions concerning publics and public sphere.

As explicated before, however, conceptualization of the public was already without Gilman-Opalsky’s modifications in many cases, but especially in Dewey’s, able to move beyond traditional boundaries and borders set by modernity. Even with most of their initial characteristics they gain in relevance with before-mentioned vast social transformations and Gilman-Opalsky merely successfully built on earlier concepts. As indicated by Splichal (2010, 35), “paradoxically, the conceptualization of governance excludes ‘the public’ but it comes confusingly close to the traditional concep-



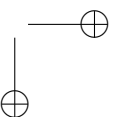
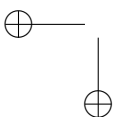


tualization of 'the public'." However, as he also accurately suggests, "there is *one fundamental difference*. The democratic participation of citizens, which is essential for any political conceptualization of 'the public', is marginalized or even completely left out from the process of governance." Amongst many of the paradoxes that have pervasively entered postmodern social life this one can be seen as crucial for understanding the crisis of democracy and also wider legitimization crisis that has started to define postmodern societies. Decreasing influence of citizens and publics can mainly be attributed to relations of power in post-Fordist capitalism that have quite evidently been tilted in direction of the strongest transnational politico-economic actors, away from the influence of the public. These actors have little to none democratic legitimacy and/or accountability, but are able by sheer force to monopolize public discourse and determine (or at least strongly influence) decisions.

### **Power asymmetries in capitalism and the media-system crisis.**

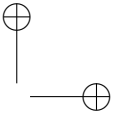
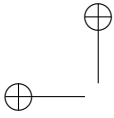
How people engage with powerful economic institutions, states, and with each other were principal questions that led Dan Hind (2010) to rethink the role of the public, what it means to act in public capacity, and what does it mean to engage in public life. He inquired why public communication has broken down and critically assessed failings in fundamental information-systems of our societies. He stressed that the concept of the public has become increasingly confused and that "publics that do exist as sites of effective and self-conscious decision about the future of our countries for the most part deliberate without publicity. Ours is an age of secluded, even secretive, publics." (ibid. 5) This can be readily applied to my previous observations regarding changes taking shape through the governance; these processes are completely removed from any possible notion of democratic accountability. Hind believes that while independent means of subsistence (economic liberty as independence) are of crucial importance for political liberty - similarly as republican authors have argued - today accurate information is of equally high importance: "only an adequately informed population, acting as public, can legitimately decide how society is to be organized" (2010: 10) and become 'sovereign public'. But for this to happen, new constitution of information and media system is necessary, which would secure that 'the population as a whole enjoys the same power to inform itself that the powerful have always enjoyed'. In a more radical manner, Robert W. McChesney (2008: 499) repeats Hind's observations, stating that "no one thinks anymore that media reform is an issue to solve 'after the revolution'. Everyone understands that without media reform, there will be no revolution."

Several theorists drew direct connections between democratic media system and



independent, autonomous public(s). One of the first authors writing on this subject, Gabriel Tarde, saw establishment and development of the press as a crucial component, even an 'infrastructural precondition', for the formation of the public; the media were seen as 'organs of the public'. Continuing crisis of the media system and especially failings of the serious press are therefore amongst the issues that urgently need to be addressed; but we should stay realistic and not plan any utopian changes in the mainstream media system which has become a very profitable commodity in the hands of the few. Because of the importance and omnipresence of mass communication, dominant classes have always held control over the media (and through purveying ideology also influenced the content), which served their interests and helped to reinforce their social position (Hardt 2004, 129). "Beginning with the bourgeois revolution against aristocratic rule, means of mass communication have been effectively applied in hegemonic struggles [...] There has never been an outright sharing of space or time, or free access to major media outlets for all relevant political operatives in a democratic society." (ibid. 72) McChesney (2008) willingly acknowledges that media power should also be regarded as political power and furthermore points out that the media have become an obvious antidemocratic force, as corporate giants diminish any prospects of participatory democracy.

Current media system merely reflects the power asymmetries that plague post-Fordist capitalism, where increasingly unequal distribution of power is an undeniable fact. This poses a serious question whether the failings of the media system can be reflected and altered without changing existing power relations in society. Initial observation that debate on public sphere was characterized by elimination of the discourse on a/the public can be expanded however: the public has also in practice almost completely disappeared from the public sphere. According to Splichal (2010: 33) "it would be delusive to simply equate public sphere with sphere that consists solely of publics. Even though its participation is constitutive of the public sphere, several other major actors have entered this arena", bringing "manipulative publicity into the public sphere by subsidizing information and setting the agenda of public issues and framing public discourse." (ibid.) For Habermas (2009) these actors are interest groups, lobbyists, nongovernmental organizations, advocates, different pressure groups, experts, politicians and political parties, intellectuals, and civil society actors that all work through media-based mass communication, which is the central mode of communication in political public sphere (its infrastructure is formed by networks of media and news agencies) and "consists mainly in discourse initiated and conducted by elites" (ibid. 164). Habermas overlooks two crucial actors in capitalism however, namely media owners and their interests and the general interest of capital to advertise commodities, which are 'materializing *their* interest through the media' (Splichal, 2010: 33).



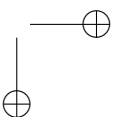
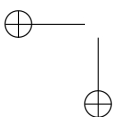
## Of the non-existence of counterpublics, or the paradox of invisible publics?

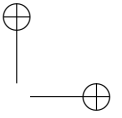
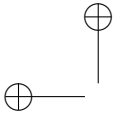
Several different authors were aware of inequalities in stratified societies that are subjugated by contemporary capitalism and aimed at establishing critical concepts that would demonstrate power differences produced by capitalism. Besides questioning singularity of the bourgeois conception of the public sphere as *the* public arena in singular, as proposed by Habermas (1989), Nancy Fraser (1991) offered an alternative concept of subaltern counterpublics that produce parallel discursive arenas where oppositional interpretations of social reality are formed. She was not the first to open these questions, Negt and Kluge (1993) were perhaps the first to do so while arguing for a separate, proletarian public sphere, but counterpublics were indeed most notably described by Fraser, when she argued for a proliferation of multiplicity of publics as being an advance for democracy. In her conceptualization, counterpublics at least partially offset, “although not wholly eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies.” (Fraser, 1991: 124) Her idea became extremely influential and produced a plethora of followers that, as already mentioned, rarely clarified what these concepts in fact mean and whether it is in fact feasible to construct concept such as ‘counterpublic’. Asen (2000: 425) at least attempted to rectify this deficiency and claimed that “counterpublics emerge as a kind of public within a public sphere conceived as a multiplicity. They illuminate the differential power relations among diverse publics of multiple public sphere. Counterpublics signal that some publics develop not simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants.” (Asen, 2000: 425) Counterpublics reconnect with public sphere and disclose relations of power that informs public discourse.

The subject of differences between a singular, universalistic public, ‘the public’, and multiple publics has not been breached in this text yet. Most of the authors would agree that at least at global level it is difficult to debate about one public nowadays, even though it could perhaps be possible to ground discussion regarding one global public sphere. As Splichal (2010: 31) describes existing social reality:

against the state there does not stand an undifferentiated, unified public sphere, but rather a network of ‘specific publics’ that preserve their borders with the general public and have relatively strong internal cohesion based upon their concern for public good rather than private interests.

But multiplicity of publics acting in public sphere already presupposes at least certain hierarchy amongst them, even if they are not additionally hindered by unequal access and inequality; is it really feasible then to define counterpublics in such a

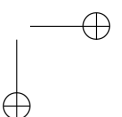
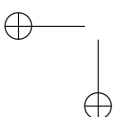


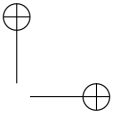


closed dialectical manner, as being opposed to the dominant discourse, or in Asen's words, as 'explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants' within differential power relations? Normatively, power relations should not play a role of course, but empirically speaking stratified societies produce big inequalities that influence accessibility and especially autonomy of publics. However, if three different publics in public sphere have three differing and contradictory opinions, which of them can be defined as counterpublic and why exactly? It should also not be forgotten that public is *by its definition* critical both toward the state and other (e.g. economic) actors leaving consequences on wider social scale, but also be autonomous from them - which is why opposition against dominant discourse cannot be seen as crucial for producing discourse on counterpublics; these presuppositions are already a part of the original concept!

The only way for counterpublic to preserve its status as a relevant (empirical!) concept is by defining them as being outside of the public sphere, as aiming and struggling to establish themselves as being a relevant and equal actor in this sphere. As suggested in previous chapter, it could be claimed that publics became practically eliminated from the public sphere where other actors gain dominant role. There are several reasons for this distinction, regarding counterpublics being inside or outside of the public sphere. For Splichal (2010: 32; emphasis added), "the existence of a public sphere is vital for a public to become *visible* through public opinion and an acting public is a necessary condition for a public sphere to really exist." According to this prerequisite we should see public sphere as producing or enabling visibility for publics; and it is quite obvious that most of publics can today hardly be defined as being publicly 'visible'. For them to be visible, public sphere should have at least certain capacity of equality within itself so it can enable visibility and furthermore influence wider society and consequently political decisions. 'Invisible' publics do not have such capacity, which means they are in fact excluded from the public sphere. The fact that some issues or opinions are published publicly (e.g. Habermas, 2009: 166) does not in fact make them automatically *visible* as such. It is one thing to (be able to) speak and another to be actually heard, as demonstrated by Hindman's (2009) analysis of extreme hierarchies that have been established on the Internet and merely replicate hierarchies of the 'real' social world. You need to be heard to have any significant power in the workings of the society. And in the context of global governance success and effectiveness of publics is willy-nilly measured by their ability to cross national borders and establish wider networks and connections, which is extremely difficult with relatively limited resources people have at disposal in contrast to the biggest transnational economic actors.

So even if it would be normatively impossible to speak of counterpublics - exclusion after all cannot be exactly seen as an ideal-type at which societies ought to aim at - there is a vast difference when we come to the empirical level of analysis. At least





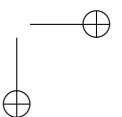
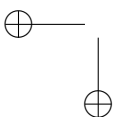
from alter-modernistic point of view, it is crucial to keep this concept on the practical level, because it ensures continuous openness of the public sphere for possible changes and deficiencies brought by unequal access. As Judith Butler points out (2006: xvii), “the public sphere is constituted in part by what cannot be said and what cannot be shown. The limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear, circumscribe the domain in which political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable actors.” Some things are rendered unsayable in certain time and space without regard of equality in power-relations or access; but these preconceived conditions are always prone to historical and spatial changes, they depend on the social context. In the case of great differences in power, however, it is especially this that can be seen as a crucial method of limiting access for Butler (ibid. xx): “To decide what views will count as reasonable within the public domain, however, is to decide what will and will not count as the public sphere of debate. [...] One way a hegemonic understanding of politics is achieved is through circumscribing what will and will not be admissible as part of the public sphere itself.” And what appears in the public sphere can be counted as reality, how people see, how they hear, what they see.

### **The public through the perspective of alter-modernity and the multitude.**

Originating in the seventeenth century political philosophy, the concept of the multitude is in many ways opposed to the concept of the people and could be very helpful for our debates about publics and public sphere. It cannot be simply reduced to One like the concept of the people was, which can be seen as one of the more problematic characteristics for actual practical existence of the concept of the public; this unitary characteristic can in many ways be seen as opposing many already mentioned characteristics of the public, which includes contradiction in opinions. As Virno (2008:25) points out:

The multitude does not clash with the One; rather, it redefines it. Even the many need a form of unity, of being a One. But here is the point: this unity is no longer the State; rather, it is language, intellect, the command faculties of human race. The One is no longer a promise, it is a premise. Unity is no longer something (the State, the sovereign) towards which things converge, as in the case of the people; rather, it is taken for granted, as a background or a necessary precondition.

Because of radical structural changes happening at the global level, Virno is certain that we could again be living in an age ‘in which the old categories are falling apart and we need to coin new ones’. These transformations have led not only into a crisis of the form-of-state, but also toward a post-Fordist type of capitalism at the



level of production, where human communication has become the basis of productive cooperation in general. In this context, the concept of 'multitude' in Virno's (2008, 21) opinion becomes a "crucial tool for every careful analysis of the contemporary public sphere. For Spinoza, the *multitudo* indicates a *plurality which persists as such in the public scene*, in collective action, in the handling of communal affairs, without converging into One, without evaporating within a centripetal form of motion. Multitude is the form of social and political existence of the many, seen as being many: a permanent form, not an episodic or interstitial form." For the multitude distinction between 'public' and 'private' does not hold and it is precisely because these distinctions have started to fall apart that it is becoming increasingly impossible to 'speak about One people converging into the unity of the state'.

Main thesis proposed by Virno's (ibid.40-41) is however less optimistic:

If the publicness of the intellect does not yield to the real of a public sphere, of a political space in which the many can tend to common affair, then it produces terrifying effects. A publicness without a public sphere: here is the negative side - the evil, if you wish - of the experience of the multitude. [...] The publicness of the intellect, when it does not take place in a public sphere, translates into an unchecked proliferation of hierarchies as groundless as they are thriving.

As can be discerned from these initial attempts of conceptualizing the multitude, even in this emerging concept the problems in its fundamentals remain basically the same - of two-folded nature. On the one hand, the existing publics remain invisible and struggle for wider social visibility that would enable them to influence any political decisions. Breaking into mainstream corporate media mostly requires production of a spectacle. It is therefore much more viable to think about constructing alternative channels of communication that would enable public to bypass existing media system. On the other hand no proper infrastructure is in place for people to act in public manner, to become a part of the public sphere, which can be seen as extremely dangerous according to Virno. It again depends on ingenuity and efforts of these publics and whether they are able to construct alternative channels of communication or not. The fact remains that in all of the cases, mainstream media should be put under serious scrutiny, while attempt to provide more regulatory mechanisms for them to act in public capacity is of crucial importance.

## Bibliographical references

ANGUS, Ian, *Emergent Publics: An Essay on Social Movements and Democracy*, Winnipeg, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2001.

ASEN, Robert, Seeking the "Counter" in Counterpublics, *Communication theory*, Vol. 10 (4), pp. 424-446, 2000.

- BUTLER, Judith, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, London, Verso, 2004.
- DAHLGREN, Peter, *Media and political engagement: Citizens, communication, and democracy*. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- DEWEY, John, *The Public and its Problems*, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1927/1989.
- FRASER, Nancy, Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy, in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, pp. 109–42, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1991.
- GILMAN-OPALSKY, Richard, *Unbounded Publics: Transgressive Public Spheres, Zapatismos, And Political Theory*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2008.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy still have an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research, in *Europe: The Faltering Project*, pp. 138–183, Cambridge and Malden, Polity Press, 2009.
- HARDT, Hanno, The Making of the Public Sphere, *The Public*, Vol. 3 (1), pp. 7–23, 1996.
- HARDT, Hanno, *Myths for the Masses: An Essay on Mass Communication*, Malden and Oxford, Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- HARDT, Michael and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, Cambridge and Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
- HIND, Dan, *The Return of the Public*, London and New York, Verso, 2010.
- HINDMAN, Matthew, *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton Press, 2009.
- MCCHESNEY, Robert, *The Political Economy of Media*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2008.
- NEGT, Oskar and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

- SPLICHAL, Slavko, *Public Opinion: Developments and Controversies in the Twentieth Century*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999.
- SPLICHAL, Slavko, Eclipse of "the Public". From the Public to (transnational) Public Sphere. Conceptual Shifts in the Twentieth Century, in *The Digital Public Sphere: Challenges for Media Policy*, Jostein Gripsrud and Hallvard Moe (ed.), pp. 23-40, 2010.
- STOKER, Gerry, Governance as Theory: Five Propositions, *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 55 (155), pp. 17-28, 1998.
- VIRNO, Paolo, *A grammar of the multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary forms of Life*, Los Angeles and New York, Semiotext(e).
- WRIGHT MILLS, Charles, *The Power Elite*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1956/2000.





## Deliberação na esfera pública em tempos de comunicação e sociedade de massa. Possibilidades de integração entre deliberações ampliadas e deliberações restritas.

Rafael Cardoso Sampaio  
Samuel Anderson Rocha Barros

### Resumo.

O artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre a possibilidade de integração entre a deliberação pública e a deliberação restrita, formalizada em minipúblicos. Na primeira parte, trata-se das deliberações amplas e informais na esfera pública, que podem atingir a todos concernidos e permitir inúmeras formas de participação. Na segunda, trata-se das deliberações restritas no interior de minipúblicos, que atendem a diversas regras visando a uma melhor qualidade discursiva, igualdade entre os participantes e um impacto tangível para o debate. Finalmente, são apresentadas quatro possibilidades de integração (e exemplos empíricos), em diferentes proporções, entre a deliberação ampliada e a restrita.

**Palavras-chave:** Democracia Deliberativa - Esfera Pública - Minipúblico.

### Abstract

This article has as its main purpose to reflect on the possibility of integration between public deliberation and restricted deliberation. In its first part it deals with broad and informal deliberations within the public sphere, which may affect all those involved and allow numerous forms of participation. As for the second part, it approaches the restricted deliberations within mini-publics, which serve various rules aiming to promote a better discursive quality, equality among its participants and a tangible impact for the debate. Finally, we present four possibilities for integration (and empirical examples), in different proportions, between amplified and restricted deliberation.

**Key words:** Deliberative Democracy, Public Sphere, Mini-publics.

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 289-300



## Introdução.

A teoria da democracia deliberativa floresceu abundantemente, impulsionada por experimentos práticos e confrontação de perspectivas teóricas, nas últimas décadas, a um ponto que certos autores consideram que toda a teoria democrática sofreu uma guinada deliberativa neste período (Dryzek, 2004). Para dar conta de novos desafios, a teoria foi aplicada, confrontada e flexibilizada, de modo a ser empregada em frentes de estudo mais recentes, como a discussão sobre *mass media* e esfera pública, internet e esfera pública e instituições deliberativas.

Segundo Simone Chambers (2009), se a teoria democrática sofreu essa guinada deliberativa, a própria teoria deliberativa estaria sofrendo uma guinada institucional, na qual a grande maioria dos autores estaria preocupada com os melhores desenhos institucionais para abarcar a deliberação. Segundo a autora, isso significaria ignorar importantes momentos democráticos, como campanhas eleitorais, referendos ou casos de formação da opinião pública. Carolyn Hendriks (2006), por sua vez, afirma que há uma ausência de estudos que tratem de um modelo de deliberação integrado, que possa se aproveitar de ambos os formatos originais.

Para atender a esta demanda, esse estudo se propõe a fazer uma reflexão sobre o conceito de deliberação integrada. Diferente de Hendriks (2006), contudo, o objetivo principal não é propor um modelo de deliberação completo, mas sim apontar formatos e desenhos que possam facilitar ou permitir a integração dos dois modos. Na primeira parte deste artigo é apresentada a deliberação ampliada; na segunda, a deliberação restrita e uma definição de minipúblicos; na terceira, quatro formas possíveis para a deliberação integrada.

## Deliberação na esfera pública e os meios de comunicação de massa.

De maneira geral, quando se pensa em um processo ampliado de deliberação, fala-se de deliberação na esfera pública. A esfera pública atua tanto no sentido de filtrar os temas, as contribuições, as informações e os argumentos “válidos” por negociações entre os diferentes atores sociais envolvidos, quanto no sentido de ampliar esses temas na sociedade através da deliberação pública informal (Habermas, 1997).

A teoria habermasiana concebe a deliberação pública como um processo discursivo ideal através do qual os cidadãos devem elaborar coletivamente um problema como uma questão de interesse geral, cuja compreensão e cuja solução requerem uma ação comunicativa recíproca. (Marques, 2009, p.12-13).

Trata-se de opiniões e públicos interconectados em diferentes níveis, de modo que seus fluxos comunicativos se tocam e se influenciam mutuamente. A esfera pú-

blica é um local onde se luta – e se coopera – por essa influência na construção de um consenso possível. Tal perspectiva teórica enfatiza os modos informais de discussão e de deliberação. A deliberação é mantida por milhões de momentos participativos de pequena escala que acontecem em momentos e lugares distintos, incluindo organizações civis e movimentos sociais, todos colaborando para a conversação pública, descentralizada e sem sujeito.

Segundo Chambers (2009), as teorias de democracia deliberativa (aquelas que defendem a deliberação nas sociedades de massa) definem a deliberação em termos de encorajar a reflexão e o pensamento sobre as questões públicas de modo discursivo e não-coercitivo. Se a deliberação restrita, como veremos, se preocupa com a tomada de decisões, a deliberação ampliada objetiva a formação de opinião (Hendriks, 2006).

Dessa forma, a mídia ocupa papel de destaque na deliberação pública. Primeiramente, por se tratar de sociedade de massa, os *mass media* são os principais canais para a conexão dos diferentes públicos localizados na esfera pública. Os diferentes argumentos, informações e temas, em muitos casos, só poderão ser reconhecidos e avaliados por outros cidadãos se alcançarem a visibilidade nos *mass media*, tornando a discussão na esfera pública aberta a todos os cidadãos concernidos (Gomes, 2008; Maia, 2008; Marques, 2009; Marques, Miola, 2010; Habermas, 2006). Logo, há uma perda das interações básicas face a face, mas ocorrem ganhos de amplitude e de inclusão (Chambers, 2009; Cohen, Fung, 2004; Dryzek, 2004; Gomes, 2008; Hendriks, 2006; Maia, 2008; Marques, 2009; Parkinson, 2006).

Em segundo lugar, está a capacidade de influência dos meios massivos. Os meios de comunicação de massa têm grande importância para o campo político formal, para organizações civis e mesmo para indivíduos, uma vez que se um tema recebe grande cobertura midiática, aumenta consideravelmente as chances de influenciar ações dos representantes políticos (Gomes, 2008; Habermas, 1997; Maia, 2008).

Finalmente, uma terceira razão (muitas vezes ignorada) é a possibilidade dos meios massivos funcionarem como local de debate. Os diferentes discursos produzidos na sociedade não apenas perpassam as mídias massivas, mas estes lances argumentativos se relacionam, caracterizando o que é chamado de deliberação midiática (Maia, 2008)<sup>1</sup>.

Por outro lado, uma boa parcela dos teóricos da deliberação ampliada vê os *mass media* como um fator complicador ou um “problema” a ser superado pelo processo deliberativo (Bohman, 2000; Chambers, 2009; Hendriks, 2006; Habermas, 1997, 2006). Marques e Miola (2010) resumem as principais críticas aos *mass media*: baixa qualidade da informação política, parcialidade e jogos de interesse, privilégio a fontes de informação específicas, enquadramentos preferenciais, prejuízo às perspectivas patrocinadas pela esfera civil. Ademais, os *mass media*, nessa perspectiva, não ob-

<sup>1</sup> Ver Maia (2008) para diversos estudos empíricos a respeito.

jetivariam a promoção da pluralidade dos discursos, mas a conquista de clientes e mercado (Bohman, 2000, p. 48).

Habermas oferece uma resposta, enfatizando a capacidade crítica da esfera pública. Mesmo que os jornalistas e as mídias massivas distorçam o conteúdo e dificultem o acesso a certos discursos, os cidadãos podem reconsiderar o que eles percebem como a opinião pública. Apenas de maneira ampla, ele defende, a deliberação pode operar como mecanismo que filtra os elementos “sujos” de um processo de legitimação estruturado discursivamente (Habermas, 2006 p. 416).

Logo, as mídias massivas desempenham um papel ambíguo. Por um lado, elas seriam pouco democráticas e pouco deliberativas por natureza; por outro, são necessárias por conta das características da sociedade de massa (deliberação midiática, cf. Maia, 2008).

### **Deliberação restrita.**

Há uma gama de críticas ao modelo de democracia deliberativa e à idéia de deliberação pública ampliada, algumas oriundas de fora do campo. Mas há também questões internas, com destaque para duas: 1) as deliberações na esfera pública apresentam baixa qualidade conforme os próprios preceitos do campo deliberacionista; 2) as deliberações ampliadas, muitas vezes, apresentam pouco impacto político palpável (Cohen, Fung, 2004).

De origem deliberacionista, uma solução possível aparenta ser a organização da deliberação em minipúblicos (Fung, 2004). Eles seriam desenhados para serem esferas públicas com melhores índices de deliberação. Assim, seriam pensados para serem grupos pequenos o suficiente para ser genuinamente deliberativos e representativos o suficiente para ser genuinamente democráticos (Chambers, 2009; Goodin, Dryzek, 2006).

De forma resumida, podemos definir minipúblicos como “eventos”, normalmente, promovidos por instituições políticas (muitas vezes por executivos municipais), nos quais a população é convocada a discutir (e, idealmente, deliberar) sobre uma temática pública. Em determinados casos, podem alcançar proeminência e se tornar eventos regulares ou mesmo instituições com certo grau de independência do Estado. Idealmente, a seleção dos participantes deve se aleatória ou representativa da população (em termos demográficos); devem ser estabelecidas regras para a discussão, que garantam, por exemplo, mesmas chances de falar e ser ouvido; e a presença de representantes do sistema político para responder às dúvidas e moderar o debate. Os objetivos também costumam ser variados, mas podem, basicamente, ser divididos em: a) eventos consultivos, no qual a instituição deseja avaliações sobre leis ou políticas públicas e, b) processos empoderados, aqueles que têm o efetivo poder de decisão sobre algum tema. Entre os vários minipúblicos existentes, podem ser des-

tacados: *Deliberative Polls*, *Citizens' Juri*, *Consensus Conferences*, *AmericaSpeaks*, além de orçamentos participativos e conselhos nacionais brasileiros (Avritzer, 2008; Fung, 2004)<sup>2</sup>.

Consoante Hendriks (2006), em um fórum deliberativo, os integrantes são livres e iguais e devem buscar o entendimento mútuo através de reflexão das idéias e perspectivas dos outros cidadãos (Hendriks, 2006, p. 493)<sup>3</sup>. Assim, tal linha defende que os minipúblicos apresentam contribuições democráticas superiores à deliberação na esfera pública, por conta da qualidade da deliberação entre um número menor de envolvidos, pela equidade dada aos participantes, pelas informações disponibilizadas e pelas regras bem definidas da deliberação (Fung, 2004). Ademais, outras vantagens de tais instituições seriam *accountability* pública (maior monitoramento de ações do Estado), justiça social (excluídos sociais com maior chance de intervenção em políticas), governança efetiva (interesses dos cidadãos melhor considerados nas tomadas de decisões) e maior mobilização popular (Fung, 2004, p. 175)<sup>4</sup>.

Por outro lado, há críticas diversas a tais iniciativas. Cortês (2005) faz um apanhado, que resumimos como: a) problema de legitimidade dos participantes; b) diferenças de poder e recursos dos atores coletivos que influenciam a tomada de decisões; c) grupos de *advocacy* que controlam a discussão, dando poucas chances ao cidadão individual. Além disso, Goodin e Dryzek (2006) alertam que os minipúblicos também sofrem de críticas de legitimidade. Eles não foram “autorizados” pela população a decidir em seu nome (*Ibidem*, p. 233) e corre-se o perigo de voltar-se ao conceito de elites que representam os cidadãos (Hendriks, 2006, p. 492).

Além disso, pode ocorrer de minipúblicos não ter poder efetivo de decisão; os grupos participantes podem ser co-optados; os minipúblicos são dependentes da vontade política dos promotores para manter seu funcionamento; geram visões restritas e locais da política; e geralmente apresentam baixos recursos em relação ao orçamento geral da instituição promotora (Avritzer, 2008; Goodin, Dryzek, 2006). Em resumo, são grandes inovações democráticas e exemplos muito próximos à ideia de deliberação pública, porém ainda são episódicos, sob controle da esfera política e com pouca legitimidade em relação ao conjunto de cidadãos.

## Deliberação integrada.

Ao fazer um esforço para conceber a ideia de um modo ou formato de deliberação composto por elementos das formas restrita e ampliada, reconhecemos que há

<sup>2</sup> Ver Goodin, Dryzek (2006) para mais informações sobre minipúblicos existentes.

<sup>3</sup> Nesse ponto, provavelmente, está a maior diferença entre mini-públicos e instituições participativas brasileiras. Estas não apenas acomodam como convidam os movimentos sociais.

<sup>4</sup> Também ver Cortês (2005) para outras vantagens apresentadas pelos autores otimistas.

poucos estudos e reflexões nesse sentido, conforme apontou Hendriks (2006), e comprovamos em pesquisa exploratória (Cohen, Fung, 2004; Chambers, 2009; Goodin, Dryzek, 2006; Parkinson, 2006). Entretanto, os motivos parecem diferentes daqueles apontados pela autora.

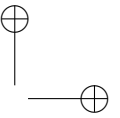
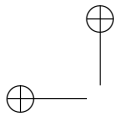
A “deficiência” está em premissas das duas áreas, que não identificam a “lacuna” em si. Cada uma acredita já ter lidado com a outra forma. Primeiramente, a deliberação ampliada seria formada por múltiplos canais de conversação e deliberação. O sistema deliberativo considera a conversação diária entre cidadãos, movimentos sociais e também a deliberação formal que acontece em parlamentos. A deliberação, dessa forma, acontece em diferentes tipos de instituições, arenas e espaços na vida social. Assim, segundo Hendriks (2009), essa teoria pressupõe que as deliberações informais irão reforçar a deliberação restrita em fóruns estruturados (ou minipúblicos).

Enquanto isso, a teoria de deliberação restrita seria, em sua própria visão, o aperfeiçoamento da ideia de democracia deliberativa. Se a deliberação ampliada é constantemente criticada por ser “irreal”, utópica e incapaz de gerar resultados justos, a deliberação restrita representaria aplicações e exemplos reais de programas deliberativos. Os minipúblicos seriam evidências empíricas de que a deliberação pode efetivamente influenciar (ou, em certos casos, gerar) a decisão política (Fung, 2004). O fato de todos os concernidos ou interessados não poderem participar é apenas uma necessidade para uma deliberação mais qualificada (Cohen, Fung, 2004). As seleções de integrantes que sejam representativos da população seriam um fator mitigador para a questão, tentando garantir que todas as parcelas da população estejam representadas.

Dessa forma, não se trata exatamente de uma lacuna de reflexões acerca da deliberação integrada, como defendeu Hendriks (2006), mas sim uma “auto-suficiência” exagerada de cada teoria.

Hendriks (2006), ao propor um modelo integrado, sugere a criação de esferas discursivas mistas (*mixed*), que combinem as duas formas de deliberação. Tratar-se-iam de locais onde atores que geralmente deliberam apenas nos espaços públicos amplos (ativistas, grupos de interesses, associação) ou apenas nos restritos (parlamentares, acadêmicos, oficiais do governo) possam entrar em contato com os atores sub-representados em ambos (cidadãos individuais). Tais espaços conviveriam bem com as contribuições dos indivíduos e também com os pontos de vista de grupos de interesses e associações civis (Hendriks, 2006, p. 501).

Entretanto, tais espaços discursivos mistos estão longe de uma deliberação integrada, ao menos como propõe a autora. Está ausente na proposta de Hendriks a questão da discussão chegar a todos os concernidos. Nesse sentido, apresentamos agora uma reflexão sobre o assunto. Ao invés de “modelo”, optamos por “forma”, “modo”



ou “*design*”, justamente por não apresentarem a complexidade de grandes modelos e por se tratarem de maneiras mais simples de efetivas deliberações integradas.

### **Inserções da deliberação ampliada na restrita**

O primeiro modo já existe e é bastante simples. Trata-se de não considerar o minipúblico como uma deliberação perfeita que pode estar completamente isolada da esfera pública. Chambers (2009) afirma que os minipúblicos funcionam independentes da mídia, não necessitando da mesma para informar adequadamente seus participantes. Esse é um equívoco grave.

As discussões na esfera pública podem e devem ser trazidas para as deliberações nas instituições participativas. Nesse sentido, quanto mais eles conhecerem os temas e as discussões vibrantes da deliberação ampliada, melhor eles poderão tratar tais questões na deliberação restrita.

Assim, defendemos que o cidadão não deve informar-se unicamente pelo material criado para o processo participativo, mas também através de outras fontes, que incluirão os meios de comunicação de massa, mas também meios alternativos, como rádios comunitárias, jornais de bairro ou *blogs* (ou *websites*) de indivíduos ou grupos interessados na discussão. Mesmo a instituição promotora pode providenciar os meios materiais para o acesso a outras fontes de informação, bem como usar material jornalístico para compor o material informativo.

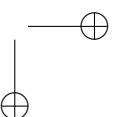
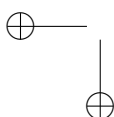
As vantagens desse desenho estão em participantes mais bem informados e melhor capacitados para representar os cidadãos não presentes na deliberação presencial. A desvantagem é que os jornais nem sempre apresentam os anseios mais imediatos dos cidadãos ou retratam equanimemente todos os grupos e discursos sociais. De todo modo, há uma expectativa de ganho na pluralidade dos argumentos.

### **Ampliação do resultado da deliberação**

Nesse formato, representantes da esfera política e da esfera civil buscam dar maior publicidade ao minipúblico de maneira geral. No momento inicial, a divulgação busca atrair novos participantes e informar os integrantes já ativos. No momento posterior, a divulgação visa a informar a população sobre os resultados da deliberação restrita.

Aparentemente, há um esforço superior na primeira etapa em comparação à segunda, sendo exatamente o grande problema desse modo de integração. Preocupa-se muito (e com certa razão) em se chamar a atenção do público (possíveis interessados em participar e concernidos com a decisão a ser tomada) e de meios de comunicação (para ampliar a visibilidade) para o acontecimento do evento participativo.

Todavia, a divulgação muda essencialmente após o evento. As associações civis e movimentos sociais fazem a divulgação dos resultados visando ao monitoramento e



a cobrança do órgão responsável. Esse, por sua vez, divulga os resultados de maneira basicamente eleitoral, ligando certas realizações (obras, por exemplo) ao programa e este ao governo. Em ambas as esferas, há pouca divulgação da discussão, das atas, das resoluções, dos projetos não encaminhados, motivações e afins. Ou seja, a deliberação restrita não é ampliada. Considera-se o resultado concreto como o processo deliberativo em si. Nesse ponto, os meios de comunicação de massa e a imprensa, em especial, são essenciais para ampliar a discussão, para permitir que os outros concernidos estejam cientes dos argumentos apresentados e das decisões ali tomadas.

Mesmo em uma perspectiva cética, essa maior divulgação posterior acrescentaria legitimidade ao processo, assim como poderia chamar a atenção de potenciais participantes desavisados. Enfim, o grande desafio está em atrair a cobertura midiática, especialmente se o programa é sazonal e institucionalizado. Talvez sejam necessárias novas estratégias de publicidade mais interessantes para os *news mass media*, mas certamente a possibilidade de ampliação das discussões seria benéfica.

As vantagens desse modo de integração seriam maior legitimidade, maior publicidade das ações e discussões no interior do minipúblico (permitindo maior *accountability* e monitoramento social). A principal desvantagem está no fato das duas formas de deliberação ainda serem desconexas. Nada garante que uma irá influenciar a outra.

### Deliberações ampliadas para decisões restritas

O terceiro *design* é o mais raro. Em um primeiro momento, um assunto é levado para a discussão ampla na esfera pública e, em uma segunda fase, é tomada uma decisão restrita com base nessa deliberação. Essa decisão ou mesmo discussão restrita não necessariamente acontece em uma instituição participativa ou minipúblico.

É o formato basicamente utilizado por consultas públicas realizadas pela internet. Em especial, destacam-se os exemplos brasileiros do marco civil da internet<sup>5</sup> e da nova lei dos direitos autorais<sup>6</sup>. Em ambas, os órgãos responsáveis promoveram uma grande discussão na sociedade, que envolveu cidadãos individuais, associações civis e também grupos de interesses (como a Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil, no caso dos direitos autorais). Nos dois casos, as instituições promotoras abriram sites na internet, nos quais indivíduos ou coletivos poderiam registrar suas opiniões e deixar colaborações, que eram visíveis e abertas aos outros participantes. Ao fim do prazo

<sup>5</sup> O Ministério da Justiça brasileiro lançou em 29 de outubro de 2009 o projeto para a construção colaborativa de um Marco Civil da Internet no Brasil. Fonte: <http://culturadigital.br/marcocivil/>. Acesso em 24 Ago. 2010.

<sup>6</sup> “Em 2007, o Ministério da Cultura lançou o Fórum Nacional de Direito Autoral, com o objetivo de dialogar com a sociedade civil sobre o marco legal que regula os direitos autorais”. Fonte: <http://www.cultura.gov.br/consultadireitoautoral/>. Acesso em 20 Ago. 2010.



estipulado, todas as colaborações foram recolhidas pelas instituições com a promessa de que seriam consideradas<sup>7</sup>.

Ainda nesse formato, outro exemplo proeminente é o orçamento participativo digital de Belo Horizonte<sup>8</sup>, Brasil. Trata-se de um programa participativo online em que os eleitores da cidade decidem qual obra será realizada pela Prefeitura. Nos dois exemplos, é interessante notar que havia também a possibilidade de discussões restritas através de ferramentas digitais online (fóruns, *Chat*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, ferramentas de comentários etc.).

A vantagem desse formato, no caso belo-horizontino, é que a deliberação ampliada é diretamente conectada ao processo decisório, ponto considerado falho nas teorias de democracia deliberativa. Além disso, tal modo permite que um número muito maior de pontos de vista e opiniões seja considerado. A desvantagem está na dificuldade de agregação das diferentes opiniões. No caso de consultas públicas, há um poder excessivo por parte da instituição promotora e um baixo *empowerment* dos participantes. No caso do orçamento participativo digital, a ferramenta digital de votação não é deliberativa e os críticos podem afirmar que o cidadão isolado pode votar sem avaliar as outras discussões e perspectivas em jogo (Azevedo, Gomes, 2008). Além disso, todas as outras desvantagens normalmente atribuídas à deliberação ampliada também se aplicam nesse modo.

### Ampliação do processo deliberativo

Aqui, encontra-se o modo mais integrado possível de deliberação, que será apresentado por exemplo empírico. Trata-se de um minipúblico que apresenta duas etapas: uma presencial e outra pela internet. Esse formato pode ser visto nos orçamentos participativos (OP) de Recife (Brasil)<sup>9</sup> e de La Plata<sup>10</sup> (Argentina). Na primeira etapa, semelhante aos OPs tradicionais, há assembleias abertas aos interessados, nas quais os participantes deliberam sobre o investimento de parte do orçamento público de acordo com certas regras pré-estabelecidas e com a participação de representantes do poder executivo municipal. Por outro lado, ao contrário de um OP padrão, esses cidadãos elegerão prioridades e não os investimentos em si, que serão posteriormente votadas pela população através da internet (ambos os municípios), celulares (La Plata) e urnas de votação (Recife).

Assim, um mesmo processo participativo é capaz de agregar deliberação ampliada e restrita. A deliberação restrita é realizada no interior de um minipúblico e, em um segundo momento, estendida para a esfera pública. As vantagens estão em mais

<sup>7</sup> São exemplos de consultas abertas para a elaboração de projetos de lei as experiências desenvolvidas pela Hansard Society para o parlamento inglês (COLEMAN & BLUMER, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> <http://opdigital.pbh.gov.br/>. Acesso em 6 Ago. 2010.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.recife.pe.gov.br/op/>. Acesso em 7 Ago. 2010.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.presupuestoparticipativo.laplata.gov.ar/>. Acesso em 7 Ago. 2010.

etapas de análise e de deliberação sobre o investimento do orçamento, além de uma possibilidade real das duas deliberações se complementarem. A desvantagem é que as críticas geralmente realizadas à deliberação na esfera pública também se aplicam a esse formato. Nada garante que deliberações de qualidade irão preceder as votações online.

## Conclusão

Há diversas formas de conceber uma deliberação integrada, que aproveite as vantagens da deliberação ampliada e da deliberação restrita. Esse estudo visou a apresentar algumas delas, mas não esgotá-las, pois tratam-se de desafios de *design* institucional, por parte das instituições promotoras, e de como ocupar e utilizar tais espaços, por parte da esfera civil. Buscou-se demonstrar que cada formato apresenta vantagens e desvantagens, não havendo um que seja melhor ou mesmo ideal. A adoção de um desenho ou de outro dependerá muito dos objetivos do órgão promotor ou das necessidades e anseios dos cidadãos participantes além de que não resolve todos os problemas apontados.

Ademais, as diferentes formas apresentadas demonstram a viabilidade de dois desafios. Primeiramente, é possível reformular os atuais minipúblicos existentes, de forma que suas deliberações possam ser ampliadas e alcançar mais cidadãos e coletivos interessados. Em segundo lugar, é possível criar modos novos que abarquem as duas formas de deliberação, como é o caso de consultas públicas online e, especialmente, dos orçamentos participativos de La Plata e Recife.

De qualquer forma, destaca-se que outras formas de integração existem e poderiam ser utilizadas, especialmente pelas instituições promotoras. Ao longo do texto, objetivou-se demonstrar que a internet e outros meios de comunicação podem ser ferramentas vitais para essa integração ou mesmo para reformulação e expansão dos programas deliberativos, sendo que a utilização pode se dar por iniciativa da esfera política formal ou mesmo por iniciativas civis, sendo o campo jornalístico (a comunicação de massa, em última instância) um agente importante na produção de visibilidade e de disseminação de lances argumentativos.

## Referências

- AVRITZER, Leonardo. Instituições participativas e desenho institucional: algumas considerações sobre a variação da participação no Brasil democrático. *Opinião Pública*, vol. 14, n.1, p. 43-64. Campinas, 2008.
- AZEVEDO, Neimar Duarte ; GOMES, Maria Auxiliadora. Um balanço das produções acadêmicas sobre o Orçamento Participativo de Belo Horizonte. In: AZE-

- VEDO, S. de; NABUCO, A. L. (Org.). *Democracia Participativa: a experiência de Belo Horizonte*. Belo Horizonte: Editora Leitura, 2008, p. 67-88.
- BOHMAN, James. The Division of Labor in Democratic – Discourse: Media, Experts, and Deliberative Democracy. In: CHAMBERS, S.; COSTAIN, A. *Deliberation, Democracy and the Media*. Rowman e Littlefield Publishers, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Political Communication and the Epistemic Value of Diversity: Deliberation and Legitimation in Media Societies. *Communication Theory*, n. 17, p. 348-355, 2007.
- CHAMBERS, Simone. Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: has Deliberative Democracy abandoned mass democracy? *Political Theory*, v.37, n. 3; p. 323-350, junho 2009.
- COHEN, Joshua; FUNG, Archon. Radical Democracy. *Swiss Journal of Political Science*, vol. 10, n. 4, 2004.
- COLEMAN, Stephen; BLUMER, Jay G. *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship: Theory, Practice and Policy*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- CORTES, Soraya. Fóruns participativos e governança: uma sistematização das contribuições da literatura. In: LUBAMBO, C.; COELHO, D. B.; MELO, M. A. *Desenho Institucional e participação política: experiências no Brasil contemporâneo*. Petrópolis, Vozes, 2005.
- DRYZEK, John S. Legitimidade e economia na democracia deliberativa. In: COELHO, V. S. P.; NOBRE, M. *Participação e deliberação: Teoria democrática e experiências institucionais no Brasil contemporâneo*. São Paulo: Editora 34, pp.41-62, 2004.
- FUNG, Archon. Receitas para esferas públicas: oito desenhos institucionais e suas consequências. In: COELHO, V. S. P., NOBRE, M. *Participação e deliberação: Teoria democrática e experiências institucionais no Brasil contemporâneo*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2004.
- GOMES, Wilson. Da discussão a visibilidade. In: GOMES, Wilson; MAIA, Roussely C. M. *Comunicação e Democracia: problemas e perspectivas*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2008.
- GOODIN, Robert E.; DRYZEK, John S. Deliberative Impacts: the macro-political uptake of mini-public. *Politics Society*, v. 34, p. 219-244, 2006.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen. *Direito e Democracia: entre facticidade e validade*, v. 2. Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1997.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Political Communication in media society: Does Democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research. *Communication Theory*, n. 16, p. 411-426, 2006.
- HENDRIKS, Carolyn M. Integrated Deliberation: Reconciling Civil Society's Dual Role in Deliberative Democracy. *Political Studies*, v. 54, p. 486-508, 2006.
- MAIA, Rousiley C. M. (Coordenação) *Mídia e Deliberação*. Rio de Janeiro: FGV Editora, 2008.
- MARQUES, Ângela C. S. As interseções entre o processo comunicativo e a deliberação pública. *A Deliberação Pública e suas dimensões sociais, políticas e comunicativas: textos fundamentais*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2009, p. 11-28.
- MARQUES, Francisco P. J. A.; MIOLA, Edna. Deliberação mediada: Uma tipologia das funções dos media para a formação do debate público. *Estudos em Comunicação*, Portugal, n.7, v. 1, p. 1-28, 2010.
- PARKINSON, John. Holistic democracy and physical public space. *British Journal of Political Science Conference*, Londres, 8, Jun 2006.



## Blogosfera como esfera pública alternativa?

Elsa Costa e Silva

### Resumo.

O papel da internet na reconfiguração da esfera pública tem sido crescentemente escrutinado. Enquanto espaço aberto e de livre acesso, a internet pode potenciar a participação política dos cidadãos e constituir-se como um *fora* de discussão e debate político. Neste campo, a blogosfera, nomeadamente a blogosfera política, é crescentemente analisada como uma nova esfera pública onde opiniões e perspectivas sobre aspectos da vida pública são expressas numa deliberação em contínuo. Contudo, alguns académicos têm alertado para as inconsistências de uma visão demasiado utópica da blogosfera, considerando que as discussões são fragmentadas e, muitas vezes, embebidas de sentimentos negativos e insultos e não constituídas por argumentos racionais. Por outro lado, há ainda a considerar se, de facto, a blogosfera constitui uma alternativa independente de discussão política ou se está “tomada” pelo status quo dos tradicionais centros de poder. A investigação académica tem demonstrado que a discussão online está dominada, tal qual a que acontece na vida real, por elites e não é capaz de influenciar a opinião pública. Nesta perspectiva, a análise das potencialidades da blogosfera enquanto espaço de reconfiguração da esfera pública deve evidenciar as suas características enquanto expressão de visões alternativas. Este artigo visa contribuir para esta questão, propondo um enquadramento de análise da blogosfera que passa pelo mapeamento das relações entre os actores da blogosfera (i.e. os *bloggers*) e outros centros de poder, nomeadamente os media, os partidos políticos e outras formas de participação da vida pública. Através da análise do caso português, que assenta num inquérito administrado *online* aos *bloggers* dos 20 blocos políticos portugueses mais lidos, este artigo evidencia as conexões da blogosfera política portuguesa assim como as reflexões que se podem tecer sobre a possibilidade de se constituir uma esfera pública alternativa.

**Palavras-Chave:** esfera pública, blogosfera política, bloggers.

### Esfera pública e Internet.

Uma reconfiguração da esfera pública potenciada pelas potencialidades da internet tem sido crescentemente projectada por discursos políticos, investigação académica

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 301-312



mica e reflexão filosófica. A esfera pública, termo cunhado por Jürgen Habermas (1989), designa um espaço onde ganha corpo uma arena mais ou menos aberta e autónoma para o debate político. Garantidas as liberdades de expressão, associação e reunião, o acesso a este espaço é livre para quem quiser, racionalmente, argumentar e deliberar.

Desde a primeira configuração da esfera pública – tal como descrita por Habermas como sendo os cafés ou sociedades de debate do século XIX – até aos desenvolvimentos subsequentes que incluem a incorporação dos *mass media*, muitas formas foram-lhe sendo atribuídas. Os pressupostos de funcionamento, contudo, têm sido mantidos. A esfera pública deve possibilitar a apresentação das diferentes alternativas relativamente à matéria em discussão, sendo que o objectivo primeiro é sistemática e criticamente verificar as políticas governamentais. Por isso mesmo, a esfera pública deve ser um espaço independente dos interesses comerciais ou mesmo estatais e onde a igualdade dos participantes é assegurada. Da discussão gizada nestes pressupostos deve emergir uma opinião pública esclarecida que possa guiar o exercício do poder. Esta conceptualização da esfera pública resulta na obrigatória presença dos cidadãos como produtores também de opinião e discussão, sendo que é um espaço onde se realiza um combate contínuo sobre a legitimidade das definições e categorias através das quais os temas são analisados e discutidos (Verstraeten, 1996).

O trabalho pioneiro de Habermas nesta matéria não foi isento de críticas dos mais diversos quadrantes (Verstraeten, 1996). Dúvidas sobre a conceptualização histórica da esfera pública que não impediram, contudo, que o conceito se afirmasse como um instrumento operacional na discussão sobre formas de participação política. Neste campo, o papel da internet e deste ciberespaço que proporciona é um dos principais temas que marca a perspectiva de uma reconfiguração da esfera pública – ideal ou realizada.

Enquanto espaço aberto e de livre acesso, a internet pode potenciar a participação política dos cidadãos e constituir-se como um *fora* de discussão e debate político. Dahlberg (1998) expõe alguns argumentos apresentados por hostes mais optimistas nestas matérias, nomeadamente o facto de permitir que todos os cidadãos sejam ouvidos em igualdade de circunstâncias e que estes sejam mais informados. Por estas e outras razões, o ciberespaço tem sido considerado como a plataforma tecnológica que facilita o ideal de uma esfera pública, providenciando o espaço para a interacção de cidadãos que, deliberando livremente sobre assuntos de interesse mútuo, podem influenciar o governo dos assuntos públicos.

A internet cumpre, enquanto potencial espaço de esfera pública, os pressupostos da liberdade de participação (uma vez que os custos de entrada são praticamente nulos) de todos os cidadãos e não apenas dos profissionais (sejam do jornalismo ou da opinião) que colonizam os *mass media*. Por isso mesmo, a internet é uma importante ferramenta democrática. Permite que novas práticas e instituições sejam reestrutu-



radas e que os indivíduos, enquanto tal, possam afectar o debate público – não os limitando à pertença a um qualquer grupo social organizado (ex. partido político) para ter uma voz participativa nos interesses do Estado. Barreiras geográficas e, em última instância, até as desigualdades sócio-económicas podem ser ultrapassadas, ou melhor, apagadas por esta nova tecnologia. O activismo cívico pode ganhar nova força, com benefícios para as democracias.

## O caso específico da blogosfera.

A internet, escreve Baker (2007: 98) tem “efeitos transformativos na esfera pública que potencialmente – ou já mesmo – têm um grande significado político e democrático”, nomeadamente através da blogosfera que fornecem novos importantes espaços para “o discurso público num mundo onde tais espaços têm, na prática, vindo a diminuir”. Neste campo, a blogosfera, nomeadamente a blogosfera política, é crescentemente analisada como uma nova esfera pública onde opiniões e perspectivas sobre aspectos da vida pública são expressas numa deliberação em contínuo. A blogosfera pode ainda revitalizar funções da sociedade civil, como o escrutínio permanente dos poderes públicos, a disseminação da informação e a capacitação dos cidadãos para a defesa dos seus interesses.

A história tem mostrado que as novas tecnologias de comunicação têm sempre sido recebidas com discursos de fervoroso apoio, baseados na crença de um mundo genericamente melhor, mais justo e democrático. A internet foi recebida com igual retórica utópica e é essencial “determinar se a internet e tecnologias anexas vão realmente revolucionar a esfera política ou se serão adaptados pelo *status quo* actual, especialmente numa altura em que o público demonstra um actividade política dormente e desenvolve um crescente cinismo face à política” (Papacharissi, 2002: 10).

Apesar do seu potencial, a internet não garante imediatamente uma melhor democracia e não é, em si mesma, boa ou má para atingir este princípio já que, mesmo implicada nas mudanças políticas, “não determina a sua direcção” (Gurevitch et al., 2009: 178). Maior conectividade não é sinónimo de maior representatividade e ter acesso à internet (o que já é, em si, mesmo um factor de exclusão para quem não tem) não se traduz obrigatoriamente em maior discussão política. “Ainda que haja vantagens indiscutíveis na comunicação online, estas não garantem instantaneamente uma esfera pública justa, representativa e igualitária” (Papacharissi, 2002: 14).

Uma das condições para que este ciberespaço se possa transformar numa esfera pública democrática, por exemplo, passa pelo desenvolvimento de relações mútuas simétricas entre os actores que falam, em que nenhum dos grupos existentes possa ter o monopólio dos meios de comunicação (Keane, 1984). Witschge (2004) adianta que, se por um lado, a internet pode propiciar uma plataforma de interacção para diferentes participantes com diversos passados e pontos de vista, pode também, por outro lado,



ter um efeito polarizador, servindo como um fórum dominado por participantes com iguais visões que limitam a diversidade de opiniões ao não tolerar vozes dissidentes. As estratégias são distintas, como *posts* abusivos ou estilo discursivo, mas o resultado acaba por ser o silenciamento de algumas vozes.

A investigação académica tem demonstrado que a discussão online está dominada, tal qual a que acontece na vida real, por elites e não é capaz de influenciar a opinião pública. Sendo uma reprodução no que acontece no debate político tradicional, a blogosfera pode apenas ser uma plataforma adicional e não uma verdadeira alternativa que transforme o espaço e a estrutura política (Papacharissi, 2002). A disponibilização da informação na internet não garante, por outro lado, total visibilidade ou mesmo acesso a ela, já que implica competências a nível de organização, detecção e leitura não igualmente distribuídas pela população. Alguns académicos têm alertado, assim, para as inconsistências de uma visão demasiado utópica da blogosfera, mostrando ainda que muitas discussões são fragmentadas e, muitas vezes, embebidas de sentimentos negativos e insultos e não constituídas por argumentos racionais (Papacharissi, 2002).

## A blogosfera política.

A blogosfera política tem recebido crescente atenção por parte da investigação académica preocupada com matérias de esfera pública e participação política. A campanha eleitoral dos EUA em 2004 providenciou um *corpus* de análise que foi profusamente analisado, do ponto de vista dos temas abordados e da agenda de campanha. Na chamada blogosfera política estão incluídos os blogues de campanha, de membros de estruturas políticas eleitos e também de cidadãos com interesses na matéria.

Pole (2010) defende que os blogues políticos são, de facto, uma nova forma de participação política, que pode transformar a política e levar a uma maior intervenção cívica. Ackland (2005) afirma que os blogues políticos apresentam uma crescente influência na política norte-americana, nomeadamente em termos dos conteúdos mediáticos e dos comentadores dos media.

Vários estudos têm procurado caracterizar a blogosfera política em vários contextos, desde os Estados Unidos (Pole, 2010; Ackland, 2005; Ekdale et al., 2010) ao Canadá (Koop and Jansen, 2009), passando pela China (Zhou, 2009) ou Egipto (el-Nawawy e Khamis, 2010). Ekdale et al. (2010) procuram explicar as motivações dos bloggers políticos americanos mais populares considerando que estas mudaram ao longo do tempo: são maiores, no presente que no início, e têm essencialmente a ver com a oferta de uma alternativa aos media mainstream. Koop and Jansen (2009) assinalam ainda uma diferença significativa relativamente aos media: enquanto os blogues se centram mais em questões substantivas, outros meios de comunicação tendem



a focar mais a política partidária. Uma prática que, segundo estes autores, alimenta a perspectiva de uma blogosfera como “fórum para a deliberação democrática” (2010: 171).

## A blogosfera em Portugal.

O nascimento da blogosfera em Portugal, enquanto fenómeno, é geralmente apontado como tendo ocorrido em 2003 (há, segundo Canavilhas, referência a um primeiro blog em 1999), sendo o momento mais marcante desse parto a criação do blog “Abrupto” por parte do então eurodeputado Pacheco Pereira, por ser uma figura pública que conseguiu catapultar a atenção para esta nova plataforma. Os media tradicionais passaram então também a olhar para este novo meio e, em 2004, estimava-se existirem em Portugal cerca de 90 mil blogues – num movimento muito marcado por criações sem consequências, poucas actualizações e até várias desistências.

Vários estudos analisaram já a blogosfera portuguesa (Cardoso et al., 2009; Silva, 2009; Carvalho e Casanova, 2010) e encontramos também várias referências à especificidade política deste novo ciberespaço (Canavilhas, s/d; Serra, s/d; Montez e Gama, 2010). De acordo com Canavilhas (s/d: 5), “a blogosfera portuguesa continua a fervilhar, com um nível de discussão pouco visto nos meios de comunicação tradicionais”, constituindo um “fórum de discussão impar”, caracterizado pelo facto de “os blogues que abordam questões políticas [não terem parado] de crescer”. Também Silva (2009: 70) realça a dimensão política da blogosfera, considerando que “começou, essencialmente, por ser política” e que teve “um alargamento de participantes que veio acender muitas discussões ideológicas não possibilitadas no circunspecto mundo da comunicação social”.

Cardoso et al. (2009: 121) consideram que “os blogues são ainda um *media* de introdução recente e pouco difundido, embora em crescimento”. Contudo, “a blogosfera portuguesa pode ser considerada como a sucessora dos cafés públicos do século XIX, pelo seu papel na criação de uma nova esfera pública, no sentido em que, tal como então, é um número reduzido de pessoas que centram a sua actividade em torno das questões comunicativas e políticas”. Carvalho e Casanova realçam o facto de os bloggers portugueses serem “uma população relativamente homogénea, possuidora de recursos em geral elevados” mesmo que “atravessa por divisões simbólico-ideológicas” (2010: 113). Ainda que a questão do capital cultural e da literacia necessária à utilização da blogosfera não deva ser esquecida, não se deve minimizar “a discussão sobre a possibilidade de expansão da esfera pública facultada por este meio” (2010: 113).

## Desenho da investigação.

A constituição da blogosfera enquanto esfera pública carece, assim, de alguns pressupostos. Para se assumir como um verdadeiro fora de discussão política, a blogosfera deverá ser independente dos tradicionais centros de poder – a saber, os *media* e partidos políticos –, porque, se por eles tomada, é apenas mais uma plataforma, mais um espaço, para a mesma comunicação que ocorre nesses domínios. Por outro lado, o acesso à esfera pública deve ser aberto a todos os cidadãos, o que significa uma pluralidade de actores, de pontos de vista, de origens geográficas e mesmo sócio-económicas. Nesta perspectiva, a análise das potencialidades da blogosfera enquanto espaço de reconfiguração da esfera pública deve evidenciar as suas características enquanto expressão de visões alternativas.

Este artigo visa contribuir para esta questão, propondo um enquadramento de análise da blogosfera política que passa pelo mapeamento das relações entre os actores da blogosfera (i.e. os *bloggers*) e outros centros de poder, nomeadamente os *media*, os partidos políticos e outras formas de participação da vida pública. O perfil socio-económico dos *bloggers*, assim como a sua filiação política, são igualmente factores que permitem perceber se divergem, ou não, dos tradicionais participantes do debate público.

Para avaliar estas questões, analisámos o caso português. Foi administrado um inquérito online, durante o mês de Maio de 2010, aos bloggers dos blogues políticos portugueses constantes da lista dos 200 blogues mais lidos, de acordo com dados do Blogómetro. Por um lado, a nossa opção foi por uma selecção dos blogues com maior atenção, de forma a centrar a análise na plataforma com maior projecção e alcance público. A selecção foi feita de acordo com o conteúdo dos blogues: “*posts*” que maioritariamente versavam sobre política indicavam a presença de um blogue político (ainda que outros temas sejam aflorados e debatidos), mesmo quando a apresentação do mesmo não referenciava especificamente esta natureza. A amostra final foi de 21 blogues, dos quais obtivemos respostas de 18 (a identificação, ainda que facultativa, era pedida e explicada, o que favoreceu uma taxa de resposta muito significativa a esta questão).

O nosso número final de blogues políticos relativamente ao total dos 200 mais lidos corresponde a 10%, um valor que é consistente com outros estudos que analisaram a blogosfera portuguesa (Silva, 2009). Cardoso et al. (2009) encontraram apenas uma percentagem de 3,4% para a categoria política, sendo que 9,3% dos blogues falavam “temas polémicos da actualidade” – onde muitos temas políticos entram também. Carvalho e Casanova (2010) referenciam igualmente uma “clara predominância da política nacional”.

A identificação dos blogues e da sua presença na amostra é essencial para garantirmos a representatividade do estudo já que o universo dos seus autores é difícil

de conhecer, quantificar e muito flutuante no tempo: temos a considerar que, em primeiro lugar, há bloggers a “postar” em mais que um blogue; por outro lado, as listas de autores disponibilizadas – quando existentes – nos blogues nem sempre estão actualizadas; e, finalmente, alguns bloggers não divulgam o nome, escrevendo sob um pseudónimo. Sendo assim, preferimos a verificação da representatividade pela presença de, pelo menos, um blogger de cada blogue. Foram obtidas 63 respostas válidas. Os blogues contidos nesta amostra correspondem a um fenómeno consolidado no tempo, já que 85% dos blogues foram criados antes do 1º semestre de 2007.

O inquérito foi enviado para as caixas de correio electrónico com endereços disponibilizados nos blogues, individuais ou colectivos, e também caixas de correio pessoais dos bloggers que fossem divulgados publicamente. O questionário tinha 25 perguntas, que englobavam questões relacionadas com as características sócio-económicas dos bloggers, prática “bloggista”, consumos mediáticos e ligações a media, partidos políticos e outros modos de participação cívica.

## Discussão.

### Perfil.

A constituição da esfera pública, sua concepção habermesiana, implica um acesso livre de todos os cidadãos para que uma diversidade de opiniões, pontos de vistas e perspectivas esteja representada. Para aferir dessa diversidade, olhámos para o perfil dos *bloggers* políticos portugueses para perceber se existe aí uma diversidade proveniências, em termos de formação, geografia e ocupação, que possa dar conta da pluralidade de tendências políticas da vida política portuguesa.

O perfil do *blogger* político português que emerge deste inquérito é muito claro: homem (84%), com idade entre os 30 e os 50 anos (71,4%), a viver nas grandes áreas metropolitanas de Porto e Lisboa (80%) e com uma profissão qualificada. Estes valores não diferem do que é a participação política portuguesa tradicional, sobretudo no que diz respeito à fraca participação feminina e à concentração nas principais áreas urbanas portuguesas.

Por outro lado, ainda que a masculinização e urbanização da blogosfera em geral sejam já tendências descritas (Silva, 2009; Carvalho e Casanova; 2010), quando se analisa especificamente a sua dimensão política, acentuam-se estas características. Em Silva (2009), a percentagem de homens bloguistas é de 76% e de residentes nas áreas do Grande Porto ou Lisboa de 51,6%. Em Carvalho e Casanova (2010), o universo masculino corresponde a 80,7% da sua amostra e a residência nas grandes áreas de Lisboa (incluindo Setúbal) e Porto vale 60,6%.

O blogger político português é também um actor com um perfil sócio-económico bem definido: todos têm uma profissão qualificada e um terço tem mesmo uma pós-

graduação. Gestores/empresários, professores/ investigadores e jornalistas/profissionais da comunicação surgem muito bem representados nesta amostra. Uma caracterização já evidenciada por Carvalho e Casanova (2010: 102) no que diz respeito à blogosfera em geral: “observa-se, pois, uma marca de classe vincada nesta população, tratando-se fundamentalmente de um sector sociocultural com recursos elevados, que exerce profissão ou que estuda e que mobiliza esses recursos elevados para o debate público”.

Finalmente, o perfil do *blogger* político português passa ainda por ser caracterizado, por um lado, por uma elevada presença nas redes sociais. Mais de metade participa em, pelo menos, outro blogue e 75% refere estar ligado a redes como Facebook ou twitter. Três em cada quatro *bloggers* afirmam ler frequente ou mesmo diariamente outros blogues políticos. Por outro lado, há igualmente um grande e muito semelhante consumo dos meios de comunicação tradicionais. Tipicamente, o *blogger* político português vê frequentemente a SIC Notícias, lê preferencialmente o Público e ouve sobretudo a TSF.

### **Ideologia e motivação.**

Há uma marca ideológica muito forte na blogosfera política portuguesa. Apenas 15% dos inquiridos responde que o *blog* não partilha de nenhuma ideologia política. A filiar-se na Esquerda e Centro Esquerda temos 18% das respostas e na Direita, Centro Direita e Conservador perto de 21%. Nenhum *blog* diz ser democrata-cristão ou ecologista. A maioria dos *bloggers* (quase 40%) afirma ser Liberal, uma nota interessante já que essa ideologia política não faz parte do espectro partidário português nem tem qualquer representação parlamentar.

Na política, mais do que na blogosfera em geral, a participação é feita em grupo. Os blogues não são, na sua grande maioria, projectos individuais mas sim uma estratégia colectiva – apenas 16% dos *bloggers* têm um *blog* individual político, quando na blogosfera em geral esse valor chega aos 66% (Silva, 2009). Ainda que 35% garanta “postar” numa base diária (dos quais perto de metade fazem-no até mais do que uma vez ao dia), a dinâmica da blogosfera política requer um ritmo mais acelerado que é dificilmente compaginável com as actividades profissionais que desenvolvem estes actores (todos atestam ter uma profissão) – o que poderá justificar esta presença na blogosfera numa base de grupo.

Quando questionados sobre as motivações para participar na blogosfera política, a maioria diz fazê-lo, em primeiro lugar, como uma forma de intervenção cívica. Também importante é a intervenção política e o facto de possibilitar dar a conhecer opinião própria. Os assuntos mais frequentemente abordados são, para mais de metade dos inquiridos, temas próprios da situação política nacional e, em segundo lugar para um terço dos *bloggers*, comentários à actualidade noticiosa.

As percepções que estes actores têm da sua actividade são também significativas



no que diz respeito à importância que lhe conferem. Por exemplo, quase 60% acredita que o facto de escrever num blogue aumentou a sua influência no espaço público e 71% crê que a blogosfera pode influenciar o curso da vida política portuguesa. A credibilidade que atribuem à sua intervenção é assim muito elevada. Quando questionados porquê, as respostas apontam para o facto de terem criado uma audiência, sobretudo entre agentes da política e dos meios de comunicação tradicionais, e portanto de serem uma voz ouvida no espaço público.

### **Ligações aos meios tradicionais de poder: os *media* e a política.**

Averiguar da possibilidade de a blogosfera se transformar numa esfera pública, num espaço alternativa de opinião e de deliberação, passa por precisar o seu grau de independência e autonomia face aos tradicionais centros de poder como são os *media* tradicionais e os partidos políticos. Assim, a blogosfera será realmente uma esfera pública se se distanciar dos discursos do poder: caso contrário, corre o risco de ser apenas mais uma plataforma para as “vozes do costume”, que habitam todos os outros ambientes de discussão e produção de opinião.

Quando questionados sobre as suas ligações aos meios de comunicação tradicionais, mais de 50% dos *bloggers* dizem ter sido convidados para participar em espaços de opinião dos meios de comunicação tradicionais (imprensa, televisão e rádio) e 20% tem mesmo espaços regulares de opinião, sendo que metade desenvolve essa actividade em mais de um meio. Uma das razões que levam os *bloggers* a considerar que a sua influência aumentou no espaço público diz exactamente respeito ao facto de ter sido convidados por um *media* tradicional.

Por outro lado, quando questionados sobre as suas estratégias de citação (*links*) na blogosfera, 57% dos *bloggers* diz fazer frequentemente *links* para notícias de jornais, quando apenas 32% diz ter essa atitude para com “posts” de outros blogues. Por outro lado, 35% dos inquiridos diz ainda fazer *links*, frequente ou ocasionalmente, para artigos de opinião próprios que publicam nos *media mainstream* – transformando desta forma a blogosfera numa caixa de ressonância das plataformas tradicionais.

Quando olhamos para a participação em partidos políticos, as ligações a este mundo são menos expressivas, mas ainda assim são significativas. Cerca de 45% dos *bloggers* tem ligação a um qualquer partido político, numa escala que vai do facto de ser apenas simpatizante ao facto de ser titular de um cargo político. Um terço diz-se militante, 14% é membro de alguma estrutura local ou nacional e 15% é dirigente ou titular de cargo político.

A presença nos *bloggers* no espaço público mais amplo é ainda muito significativa: quase 80% afirma manter outras formas de participação. Mais de 40% participa em debates ou conferências e 30% já escreveu livros. Mais de 50% atesta ainda ter



participado de movimentos cívicos, numa grande variedade de causas que incluem o aborto, os direitos humanos, o ambiente, o voluntariado, etc.

### Notas finais.

Este artigo procurou evidenciar as conexões da blogosfera política portuguesa com os tradicionais centros de poder, procurando assim levantar algumas reflexões que se podem tecer sobre a possibilidade de se constituir uma esfera pública alternativa.

Em primeiro lugar, há que salientar que a blogosfera não forneceu uma nova categoria de actores políticos – continuamos a ter uma classe homogénea dotada de recursos culturais e sociais, predominantemente masculina e urbana. Desempregados, trabalhadores pouco qualificados ou com escolaridade baixa – que trariam para o espaço público e debate um conjunto diferente de preocupações – estão ausentes da blogosfera política mais lida em Portugal. O interior do País também ainda não chegou a esta plataforma. E assim esta não pode considerar-se como equitativa e representativa já que estas dimensões contrariam o pressuposto de uma esfera pública onde todos os cidadãos e todas as alternativas de discussão estão presentes. Os bloggers são agentes que habitam a mesma atmosfera mediática e que portanto respiram as mesmas notícias e as mesmas opiniões. Assim, falta averiguar até que ponto esta situação condiciona a discussão: os actores podem ter ideologias e valores diferentes, mas a sua manifestação acontece a propósito dos mesmos temas. Ou seja, haverá diversidade de posições ideológicas relativamente aos assuntos, mas não diversidade nos assuntos. A exclusão de temas da política nacional é tão importante na averiguação das condições de funcionamento da esfera pública como a aferição da diversidade de opiniões a propósito dos temas que afloram este ciberespaço.

Por outro lado, é claro que a blogosfera não surge em paralelo aos *media mainstream*, mas sim em estreita conexão. Para além de uma percentagem significativa de *bloggers* participar, numa base regular ou não, em espaços de opinião da comunicação social, há que salientar que 15% são mesmo jornalistas. E, por outro lado, parece haver uma maior propensão dos bloggers para “linkar” notícias dos media nos seus *posts* de que outros blogues. A blogosfera é ainda um espaço maioritariamente habitado por actores que surgem em outras plataformas, sejam elas partidárias, de movimentos cívicos ou de actividades da vida pública.

Desta forma, evidenciam-se lógicas de migração e de colonização entre as diversas plataformas da vida pública. Os jornalistas tornaram-se bloggers, estes “*opinion-makers*” dos meios tradicionais – complexificando as relações entre os media e a blogosfera e tornando mais fluida as origens da opinião e do facto político. Os membros dos partidos também entraram na blogosfera mostrando que as lógicas de reprodução do poder se mantêm nas distintas plataformas.

Mas não deve ser ignorado, por outro lado, um facto algo revelador do estreitamento actual da política partidária: quase 40% dos bloggers afirma-se liberal, o que é significativo num país onde, contrariamente ao que acontece na maioria da Europa, esta ideologia não tem representação partidária ou parlamentar. E nesse aspecto, a blogosfera pode, de facto, ser o espaço de amplificação de uma voz silenciada noutras instâncias públicas.

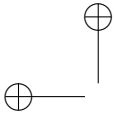
Estas considerações levam a refrear ímpetos mais optimistas na classificação da blogosfera como uma nova e pujante esfera pública alternativa. Apesar das suas potencialidades, a prática dos actores devem ser investigada mais profundamente antes de a tecnologia ser classificada como revolucionária da participação democrática e das práticas políticas portuguesas. Como em qualquer outro caso, a apropriação da tecnologia por parte dos cidadãos marca a sua evolução e transformações que pode suscitar na sociedade.

## Referências

- ACKLAND, Robert, *Mapping the U.S. Political blogosphere: are conservative bloggers more prominent?*, BlogTalk Downunder 2005 Conference, Sydney
- BAKER C. Edwin. *Media concentration and Democracy – why ownership matters*, Cambridge University Press 2007
- CANAVILHAS, João, *Blogues políticos em Portugal: o dispositivo criou novos actores*, disponível em , consultado a 5 de Maio de 2011.
- CARDOSO, Gustavo, ESPANHA, Rita, ARAÚJO, Vera, *Da comunicação de Massa à Comunicação em Rede*, Porto, Porto Editora, 2009.
- CARVALHO, Tiago, e CASANOVA, José Luís, *Esfera Pública, democracia e internet: os bloggers em Portugal*, Observatório Journal 4 (2): 91-118, 2010
- DAHLBERG, Lincoln, *Cyberspace and the Public Sphere: exploring the democratic potential of the net*, Convergence 4: 70-84, 1998
- EKDALE, Brian, NAMKOONG, Kang, FUNG, Timothy K.F., PERLMUTTER, David D., *Why blog? (Then and now): exploring the motivations for blogging by popular American political bloggers*, New Media & Society 12: 217-234, 2010.
- EL-NAWAWY, Mohammed and KHAMIS, Sahar, *Political blogging and (Re) envisioning the virtual public sphere: muslim-christian discourses in two Egyptian blogs*, The International Journal of Press/Politics 2010

- GUREVITCH Michael, COLEMAN Stephen, BLUMLER Jay G., *Political Communication – Old and New Media Relationship*. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 625: 164-181, 2009.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, Boston, MIT press, 1989.
- KEANE, John, *Public life and late capitalism: toward a socialist theory of democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- KOOP, Royce, Jansen, Harold J., *Political blogs and blogrolls in Canada: forums for Democratic deliberation*, Social Science Computer Review 27: 155-173, 2009.
- MONTEZ Rui, GAMA João Vasco, *Esfera Pública @ Blogosfera – Análise das relações entre a imprensa e a blogosfera ao nível do debate político*, Prisma.com, consultado a 5 de Maio de 2011.
- PAPACHARISSI, Zizi, *The virtual sphere – the internet as a public sphere*, New Media & Society 4:9-25, 2002.
- POLE, Antoinette. *Bloggging the Political – politics and participation in a networked society*, New York, Routledge, 2010.
- SERRA, Paulo, *Os blogues e a questão do agendamento*. , consultado a 5 de Maio de 2011.
- SILVA, Paula Oliveira, *Blogo logo existo*, Lisboa, Media XXI, 2009.
- VERSTRAETEN, Hans. *The media and the transformation of the Public Sphere: a contribution for a critical economy of the Public Sphere*, European Journal of Communication 11: 347-370, 1996
- WITSCHGE, Tamara, “Online deliberation: possibilities of the internet for deliberative democracy”, in SHANE, Peter M., *Democracy online: the prospects for political renewal through the internet*, London, Routledge, 2004.
- ZHOU, Xiang, *The political blogosphere in China: a content analysis of the blogs regarding the dismissal of Shanghai leader Chen Liangyu*, New Media & Society 11: 1003- 1022, 2009.





# Just “Like” it and “Join”. Facebook and the European cultural public sphere.

Ancuta-Gabriela Tarta

## Abstract

The present paper analyzes the communication process between the European institutions and the citizens on one of the most popular social networking sites – Facebook, in view of its possible contribution to the European cultural public sphere. It lies on the premise that, due to characteristics of these virtual spaces and their special type of rhetoric, the topics discussed in the online social networking sites are primarily cultural, or culturally framed. As a result, a cultural public sphere is likely to emerge in these media, before a political public sphere. The cultural public sphere has the role of raising awareness about the political issues, which can further on lead to citizen participation in the debate of EU-related issues.

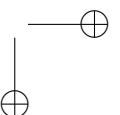
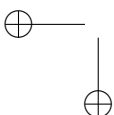
The first part focuses on the concept of the public sphere, in its shift from the national to the transnational and the European paradigm. I thereafter discuss the idea of a cultural public sphere, and its relevance in the online environment. The third and fourth sections present the affordances of social networking sites for the articulation of public spheres, and their potential for the European Union, using Facebook as an example. The final section of this paper is dedicated to closing reflections on the role of the cultural manifestations in the European public sphere.

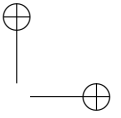
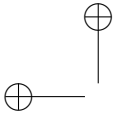
**Keywords:** cultural public sphere, social networking sites, Facebook, European Union.

## Introduction

Researching social networking sites has become a trend, as much as a necessity in the recent years. While Facebook becomes more popular every day, and is on the verge of reaching 600.000.000 users, the story of Facebook itself became popular through the release of “The Social Network”, with a box office of almost 22,5 million dollars in the weekend it was released. In this context, it is needless to stress the growing significance of Facebook in more and more domains of our lives, as it becomes increasingly harder to find something or someone who is not on Facebook. “If you’re not on Facebook you don’t exist” is a figure of speech, but it does reveal

*Public Sphere Reconsidered. Theories and Practices*, 313-323





a certain reality, namely, that by not joining Facebook one can lose a great deal of communication possibilities that can help achieve different goals.

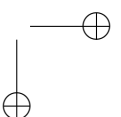
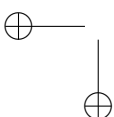
Research of online social networks is also concerned with the purpose of their influence on democratic engagement. The empowering role of the internet in terms of democratic potential is an intensely debated subject. While the internet in itself is not a public sphere, it can constitute a space for the articulation of public spheres around different issues, and most importantly, across different cultural and political spaces. It is precisely the cross-border nature of the internet that gives the whole idea of a European public sphere a new dimension.

In the context of the world-wide web, the idea of a transnational public sphere across the European Union becomes conceivable, in terms of citizens from different national backgrounds coming together as a public. This does not mean that the emergence of a European public sphere is granted, but in technical terms it is at least possible. While several studies have focused on the role of the internet in the European public sphere (Dahlgren, 2004; Van Os & Jankowski, 2005), very little research has been conducted on social networking in connection to EU, or their contribution to a European public sphere. The present paper addresses the concept of cultural public sphere in connection to social networking sites, exemplified by Facebook, from a European perspective. More specifically, it discusses the affordances of social networking sites (SNS) in general, and Facebook in particular, for aggregating a cultural public sphere in connection to the European Union. It also represents an attempt to sketch a few answers in testing a hypothesis used in a broader research that is part of my doctoral thesis, namely, that because of the characteristics (technical, communicational, social) of the SNS environments, a cultural public sphere is likely to be articulated (or emerge) on these media in connection to the European Union.

## The public sphere, national and European

As much as it is associated with discussion and debate, and considered vital for a healthy democracy, the public sphere in itself is a debated concept. If we are to move further and discuss nuances, such as the cultural and the European public spheres, a minor clarification of the concept is necessary.

Habermas's early theory explains the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere as the sphere of private people who come together as a public, to engage in a debate over the general rules governing relations of commodity exchange and social labor (Habermas, 1989:30). The public sphere (PS) in this version is linked to the national state and political forums. It represents a space for debate of societal problems between the citizens, with the purpose of influencing political decisions. While Habermas demanded rationality of the debates in the public sphere, the concept expanded as much as



including all kinds of opinions and views, as long as they respect each other (Schultz, 1997:58).

Drawing on various definitions and theories, this paper operates primarily with four major attributes of the public sphere: the public space, citizens, discussion/ debate, and connection to the decision-makers, which are used further in conceptualizing the European public sphere. This is an even more challenging issue, as shifting from national to transnational and European communication poses several viability and functionality problems that have been intensely discussed (Koopmans & Erbe, 2003; Koopmans, Neidhardt & Pfetsch, 2006; de Vreese, 2007). Theoretical models of a European public sphere have also been issued (Koopmans, Neidhardt & Pfetsch, 2006). At this point in time, any definition of the European public sphere is no less general or debatable than the European project as a whole. While some embrace the idea of a European public sphere tailored after the model of the national one (Grimm, 1993; Schelsinger, 1999), others reject it as being unfeasible, and even undesirable, considering EU's diversity and multiculturalism (Risse, 2002; Van de Steeg, 2002). As Peter Dahlgren observes (2005: 148), the term “public sphere” expresses singularity, but instead we should understand a plurality of spaces for exchanging and debating ideas. While it is not the intention to take a position in this debate, the current paper builds on the view of multiple public spheres in the European Union, and focuses on the manifestations of the European public sphere. There are several major characteristics that underlie these manifestations, and that are identifiable and measurable against empirical data.

For Brantner et al. (2005), the European public sphere is a *space for communication between political actors and citizens*, a space where matters of common interest are discussed. Erik O. Eriksen (2004) sees it as no longer uniform, but rather *polymorph, polyphonic*, and even *anarchistic*. This is entirely applicable to a European space that is highly heterogenic. Friedhelm Neidhardt (de Vreese, 2007:6) emphasizes the *feedback* of the debates taking place in the public arena: the European public sphere is a system of communication when opinions are gathered, debated and passed on. In other words, *circulating the ideas* and the results of the discussion of the issues is of crucial importance. Professor Hans-Jörg Trenz (2008) defines the European public sphere as “the *communicative infrastructure* that is used for debating the legitimacy of the project of the European integration”.

The European public sphere, therefore, is based on a few major characteristics: a communicative infrastructure, the discussion and debate of EU-related issues (citizens' communicative interactions), the circulation of ideas and of the feedback of these discussions, and the connection to the political actors and decision-makers. In these circumstances, the European public sphere is not a uniform space, and is not a singular space. The EU public sphere is emerging every time citizens come together to discuss European-related topics and politics.

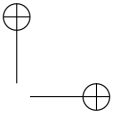
## A cultural public sphere?

The interrogation that drives this subchapter is far from being a rhetorical one. Assuming as we did that the public sphere, especially in Europe, is not a single entity, a cultural public sphere is sometimes defined in opposition to ‘the’ public sphere – that is, the political one (Hartley & Green, 2006). While a distinction should be kept and the manifestations of the cultural public sphere can be the focus of an analysis, the cultural public sphere cannot be separated from the public sphere and from its political implications, as it represents an avatar of the public sphere.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas makes a distinction between the literary public sphere (the public sphere of letters), and the public sphere of the political realm. The two forms often seem to blend well into each other. The literary public sphere is anchored in the personal, private life of the individual (Habermas, 1989).

Jim McGuigan is one of the scholars who offer an update of the concept of literary public sphere, expanding it into a cultural public sphere. In McGuigan’s view, the cultural public sphere refers to the *articulation of politics through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication* (McGuigan, 2005:427). He identifies three faces of the cultural public sphere: uncritical populism, radical subversion and critical intervention, all articulated through popular culture or counter-culture. While these are not the only manifestations of the cultural public sphere, they stress the connection between the cultural and the political in the realm of the public sphere.

John Hartley and Joshua Green also identify the cultural public sphere as emerging from cultural sources (such as ethnic origin), rather than political ones, and articulated through the private pursue of individual life and leisure activities (Hartley & Green, 2006:342). The cultural public sphere can develop more or less outside what the authors call “the” public sphere (the political one). Counter-public spheres, in opposition to public spheres, develop using various media channels that are mostly invisible to the mainstream media. They are also not constant, and they usually come into being around a cultural motif. Hartley and Green place the cultural public sphere away from politics, although at times it can represent a connection (and mediator) between culture and the politics (Hartley & Green, 2005:347, 357). Placing the cultural public sphere outside politics, however, brings us back to the question of what is the public sphere in the first place. While it is accurate to affirm that a cultural public sphere arises from cultural sources, and is articulated around a cultural motif, placing it away from politics and outside ‘the’ public sphere is a too sharp separation. The cultural and the political are interrelated in the realm of the public sphere. Peter Dahlgren’s concept of civic cultures illustrates this connection, based on the assumption that a viable democracy should be anchored in citizens’ everyday life experiences and subjective dispositions: “the idea of civic culture takes as its star-

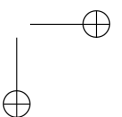
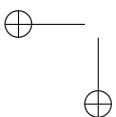


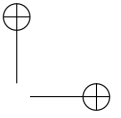
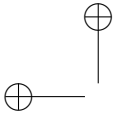
ting point the notion of citizens as social agents, and it asks what the *cultural* factors are behind such agency (or its absence). Civic cultures point to both the conditions and the manifestations of such participation; they are anchored in the mind-sets and symbolic milieu of everyday life [...] they can easily be affected by political and economic power...” (Dahlgren 1005:157).

It is the manifestations of these lived experiences and subjective dispositions that motivate citizens’ civic engagement that can be associated to the cultural public sphere. They represent what Anthony Giddens calls “life politics”, the politics of choice and lifestyle. He accurately observes the interconnection between the private and public when he defines life politics as concerning “political issues which flow from processes of self-actualization in post-traditional contexts, where globalizing influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and consequently where processes of self-realization influence global strategies” (Giddens 1991:214). Giddens sees life politics as emerging from the emancipated self of the modern age. It is the politics of life decisions of a reflexive self able to integrate information from a diversity of sources and develop inner authenticity, despite the shifting social environment. Life politics in this aspect involves debates and contestations deriving from the reflexive project of the self, and is a manifestation of the cultural public sphere.

The cultural and the political public sphere are therefore rather inseparable in the realm of what constitutes a public sphere, where the cultural issues are usually also political. When then, if ever, is the distinction viable? It is viable as long as we use the label of cultural public sphere to analyze those manifestations of the public sphere that appeal primarily to the aesthetic, emotional, and cultural, rather than the rational; where the purpose of the discussions (or debate) is not so much for the purpose of deliberation, as it is for engagement, interaction, and reciprocal feedback; and where the topics for discussion and the discourse is primarily culturally framed and deeply anchored in people’s life experiences.

Instead of a sharp distinction, the present paper operates with an integrated conceptualization of the public sphere, with cultural and the political manifestations, in a diagnostic rather than normative approach. In the realm of the public sphere, the cultural public sphere can be identified by focusing on several aspects, such as informal talk and culturally-framed arguments. In certain environments or public spaces the emergence of cultural public spheres is more likely to be observed. Focusing on the cultural manifestations, one can better understand the factors that determine people’s (dis)engagement within the public sphere. In such spaces, the cultural interactions sometimes become a way of understanding and even enhancing political actions.



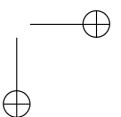
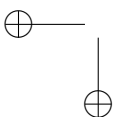


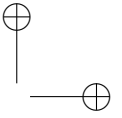
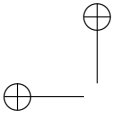
## Social networking sites as public spheres

In 2005, Dahlgren observes that the use of the internet for political purposes is minor compared to other purposes to which serves. As a result, the interactions taking place on the web can only to a minor extent be considered manifestations of a public sphere. The democratic deliberation is completely overshadowed by consumerism, entertainment, nonpolitical networking and chat (Dahlgren 2005). The internet, therefore, seems to be a good place to search for cultural articulations of the public sphere, which do not aim primarily at deliberation. The increasing popularity of some of these networking sites, such as MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, and especially Facebook places them somewhere at the heart of today's online popular culture. The social media, and particularly social networking sites (SNS) are environments where cultural public spheres emerge. They offer both the technological and interactional facilities for articulating publics, circulating ideas, and connecting them both to the mainstream media and decision makers, while offering above all a space for informal talk and leisure. There are certain key elements that constitute a social networking site, among which I will discuss *users*, *links*, *pages* and *groups*, with particular relevance to the articulation of publics and public spheres.

To fully benefit from the SNS environment, users have to subscribe and create a profile on the platform, which allows them later on to connect with other users, often identified as 'friends', and share information and other types of content, depending on the affordances of each particular network. The social network is composed of users' accounts and the links between the users. When opening a profile on the SNS, a user can choose the kind of information they want to make public or available for others to see. On Facebook, users can be individual persons, as well as companies or other organizations, governmental institutions or other public actors. While most users on Facebook have private accounts, organizations, public figures and companies usually have fan pages which other users can follow by clicking a 'Like' button available on the page.

Users form links for various reasons. They can connect to acquaintances, friends, business partners or other persons they know from real life, or they can be interested in each other's disseminated content (Mislove, 2007). The core of Facebook activity is defining a circle of "friends" with whom a user can engage in various activities (posting wall and picture comments, picture tagging, chatting etc). Facebook applications allow users to create groups, according to different topics or areas of interests. Once a users 'Join' a group, they can view and post comments, start discussion topics, share links, images and other type of content with the group. Besides offering a virtual space for communication, which is vital for any public sphere, SNS encourage the articulation of publics by offering the structural facilities for defining relations between individuals, based on their interests. The concept of the public needs reite-





ration when applied to social networking sites. As public spheres emerge and cease, so do publics. Unlike media audiences, publics are heterogenic and based on strong inner communication structures. On SNS publics emerge from the networked structure of around a common topic or issue that raises interest among the members of an online community or group and generates discussion and debate. When there is also a connection that links such groups to political decision makers, they become relevant as public spheres.

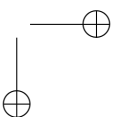
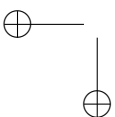
In the case of social networks, publics that form around a discussion topic can be labeled as networked publics. As Kazys Varnelis observes, during the last decade, the network has become a dominant cultural ideology. What defines network culture is the fact that information becomes more the product of the networked relations and links between people, between machines, and between people and machines. (Varnelis, 2008). Under the network paradigm, the strength of networked publics lies in the connections (links) between individuals, institutions, and individuals and institutions willing to engage in communication with each other regarding a societal issue. Networked publics are structured by the network technology, they are simultaneously spaces constructed by the network technology and the imagined communities that emerge from the intersection of people and technology (boyd, 2011).

## Facebook and the cultural public sphere. The potential for Europe

European culture and cultural diversity are political issues, at the core of the whole construction process. Diversity of cultures and languages is one of the most important characteristics that make EU a unique construction, while preserving cultural diversity is a key-aspect of EU policies. With respect to the European Union, social networking sites are places for transnational and intercultural interaction. Due to their availability and popularity across Europe, they can easily become spaces for articulating publics from citizens with different cultural and national backgrounds.

Jurgen Habermas expressed his concerns that the horizontal and informal network communication diminishes the achievement of the traditional public sphere (Habermas 2009: 53). It is precisely this kind of horizontal and informal communication that we encounter on SNS, and can associate to the cultural public sphere. The rhetoric appealing primarily to the aesthetic and emotional is what characterizes the cultural public sphere. Analyzing this kind of communication and interactional practices and the way they are culturally framed is relevant in terms of understanding how and why the public sphere functions the way it does (Dahlgren, 2005:275).

The growing importance of Facebook for informational purposes and activism is emphasized by its relations with the mainstream media. Many websites of prestigious



news channels are linked to Facebook, allowing readers to recommend certain articles to their friends. At the same time, most media institutions have Facebook fan pages or discussion groups where people can follow their activity, and where they try to engage in a more open and direct discussion with what otherwise represents a rather quiet media audience.

This is also the case of the institutions of the European Union, present on all the major social media websites, where one can encounter a more citizen-friendly European than the one we usually find in television news, which is still the main source of information for Europeans. While Facebook users have the opportunity to start their own pages and discussion groups with respect to EU-related issues, a preliminary query of the Facebook search engine shows that few of them do. Most of the groups dedicated to or against the EU, have fewer than 100 members, which makes them rather irrelevant for research. The pages and groups initiated by the European institutions, however, have significant number of users that comment, start discussion topics and engage in communication with each other. This shows people's interest to be connected to decision-makers.

As an example, EU Parliament's Facebook page is the largest of the EU networks on Facebook. The page was launched at the end of 2009, and has 155,451 "Likes"<sup>1</sup>. Most communication takes places on the page's Wall, in the forms of Comments to wall posts. In a 6-day pilot study of EU Parliament's Facebook Wall<sup>2</sup>, the main observations are that most of the posts of the EU Parliament are connected to the activity of the European Parliament or the European Union and its institutions. At the same, they offer the possibility of a global perspective, addressing human rights and social problems (prostitution, censorship, and freedom of expression) and cultural issues (minority rights, ethnicity and religion). These kind of topics, with strong both political and cultural valences, generated most comments and discussion among users.

## Final remarks

There is one objection that can be foreseen regarding the analysis of SNS as transnational public spheres that I want to address, namely the language problem. Habermas opts for a Europeanized public sphere instead of trans-European public sphere, as the latter would alter cultural diversity, by imposing one language (probably English) as the main language for communication (Habermas, 2009). However, intercultural dialogue is a crucial factor in understanding cultural differences, which can further

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/#!/europeanparliament>, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> This is a restraint pilot-study I conducted in the months of December 2010 and January and February 2011, that focused on the communication process taking place on the EU Parliament's Facebook Wall. The study has not been published, and is to be extended for the doctoral research. Its limitations are assumed.



foster a European identity. In the case of Facebook, although website is available in all the official languages of the European Union (and not only), 52% of the total Facebook users access the platform in English. The other 48% is divided between a wide range of languages, the second being Spanish, at a considerable distance from English, with 15% of the users accessing the site in this language.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the official Facebook pages of the European institutions are in English, and the discussions associated with them are usually in English. Users who are affiliate to the official pages of European institutions generally subscribe to the unwritten law of using English as a communication language. At the same time, the other groups and pages dedicated to the European Union in other languages have insignificant number of members.

This paper hopefully showed why the research of SNS in connection to the European public sphere is valuable. While a complete separation of the political and cultural public sphere is not accurate, nor desirable, can a viable distinction be made when analyzing the articulation of the public sphere through social networking sites. While these online environments move everyday forward towards the mainstream, they remain spaces of leisure and informal talk. However, when connected to decision-making forums, they become particularly relevant for the study of the public sphere. As the European Union is present on all major social networking sites, and particularly Facebook, these platforms are proper spaces for the articulation of cultural public spheres which represent both spaces for communication and interaction, and raising awareness about political issues.

In the context of the European Union, the functionality of a cultural public sphere becomes even more relevant to such an extent that the political public sphere is hard to conceive otherwise. Citizens of the EU cannot be expected to develop a “feeling” of belonging to a transnational space, as long as this space is primarily a political construction. They cannot be expected to feel “united in diversity”, and getting involved in “the” public sphere. They simply cannot be expected to feel and act like this, regardless of the unquestionable importance of a functional public sphere for the legitimacy of the European project. What citizens *can*, however, be expected to do, is act and express themselves in accordance with their cultural background, their likes, their dislikes and their inner beliefs. One place where these can be expressed is the virtual environment of SNS, which represent a space for interaction, for possible articulation of publics, for debate of EU project, but primarily for citizens with different cultural backgrounds interacting with each other. This does not mean that by analyzing SNS as public spheres the problem of the European public sphere is solved. Nor does it mean they are replacing the national public spheres. They simply represent a

<sup>3</sup> Data available since May 24, 2010, on <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2010/05/24/facebook-top-ten-languages-and-who-is-using-them/>, accessed March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

possibility for engagement of a part of the European citizens who use these platforms in their everyday communication.

## References

- BOYD, Danah, *Social Network Sites as Networked Publics. Affordances, Dynamics and Implications*, in Zizi Papacharissi (ed.), *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, Routledge, New York/London, 2011.
- BRATNER, Cornelia, *Europeanization of national public sphere: empirical evidence from Austria*, conference presented at First European Communication Conference, Amsterdam, November 24-26, 2005.
- DAHLGREN, Peter, *Civic Cultures and Net Activism: Modest Hopes for the EU Public Sphere*, at Conference on *One EU - Many Publics?* University of Stirling, 5-6 Feb. 2004.
- DAHLGREN, Peter, *The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation*, *Political Communication*, 22:147–162. Taylor & Francis Inc., 2005.
- DAHLGREN, Peter, *Doing Citizenship. The cultural origins of civic agency in the public sphere*, in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol 9(3) 267-286, Sage Publications, London, 2006
- DE VREESE, Claes, *The EU as a public sphere*, *Living Rev. Euro. Gov.*, 2, 2007, <http://www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2007-3>, accessed May 2nd, 2011.
- ERIKSEN, Erik O., *Conceptualizing European public spheres: General, segmented and strong publics*, ARENA Working Paper, Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway, 2004.
- GIDDENS, Anthony, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 1991.
- GRIMM, D, *Does Europe need a constitution?*, in *European Law Journal*, 1 (3), 282-302, 1995.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, *Europe, the faltering project*. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 2009.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, (1962)(German - English Translation), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Thomas Burger, Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989.

- HARTLEY, John; GREEN, Joshua, *The public sphere on the beach*. European Journal of Cultural Studies, Vol 9(3) 341-362, Sage Publications, London, 2006.
- KOOPMANS, Ruud; Erbe, Jessica (2003). *Towards a European Public Sphere? Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of Europeanised Political Communication*, 2006, <http://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2003/iv03-403.pdf>, accessed May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011.
- McGUIGAN, Jim, *The Cultural Public Sphere*, in European Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 8, no. 4, 427- 443, 2005.
- MISLOVE, Alan, *Measurement and Analysis of Online Social Networks*, ICM '07, October 24-26, San Diego, California, USA, 2007.
- RISSE, T., *How do we know a European public sphere when we see one? Theoretical clarifications and empirical indicators*. Paper presented at the IDNET Workshop "Europeanization and the public sphere", European University Institute, Florence, 20-21 February 2002.
- SCHULTZ, Winfried, *Changes of Mass Media and the Public Sphere*, in The Public, Vol. 4:57-69, 1997, <http://www.javnost-thepublic.org/media/datoteke/schulz-2-1997--4.pdf>, accessed. May 4<sup>th</sup> 2011.
- SCHELSINGER, Philip, *Changing spaces of Political communication: The case of the European Union*, in Political communication , 16, 263-279, 1999.
- TRENZ, Hans-Jörg, *In search of the European Public Sphere: Between normative overstretch and empirical disenchantment*, 2008, [http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/workingpapers2008/papers/wp08\\_12.pdf](http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/workingpapers2008/papers/wp08_12.pdf), accessed July, 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010.
- VAN DE STEEG, M., *Rethinking the conditions for a public sphere in the European Union*, in European Journal of Social Theory, 5(4), 499-519, 2002.
- VAN OS, Renée; Jankowski, Nicholas W., *An online European public sphere? The Web and Europeanization of political communication in the EU*, presented at: Workshop organized by the Network of Excellence CONNEX "A European Public Sphere: How much of it do we have and how much do we need?", University of Amsterdam 9-10 December, 2005.
- VARNELIS, Kazys, *Networked public*, MIT Press, MA, 2008.