

THE ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL FACTORS' BEHAVIOUR INVOLVED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EASTERN- EUROPEAN PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY (INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH)

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Rezumat: Forma deliberativă a democrațiilor moderne occidentale (devenite deziderat, mai curând decât realitate socială în Estul post-comunist al Europei) constituie, în momentul de față, o oportunitate în dezbaterile cercetătorilor și scrierile academice și mai puțin obiectul practicii. Maniera reprezentativă de a fi „participant” la treburile „cetății” s-a împământenit în societățile cu pretenții liberale, pluraliste, ea anunțând deja o criză de structură: aleșii prin vot egal (în cunoștință de cauză ori în consecința dezinformării, intoxicării, manipulării) abuzează, sub protecția legislației în vigoare, de legitimitatea conferită și „uită” în mod frecvent să reprezinte interesele electoratului cucerit de promisiuni, evită auto-responsabilizarea, stârnind astfel curente propice înlocuirii reprezentativității (tot mai birocratică și formală) printr-o modalitate a implicării directe la „democratizarea profundă și continuă”. Într-o sferă publică irevocabil mediatizată (până la „telecrație” și „sondocrație”), în absența unui parteneriat cetățean-presă în care „democrația catodică” să servească mai cu seamă opiniei publice decât politicianilor, arena electronică suplinește deficitele dialogale clasice, populată cu actori ai jurnalismului cetățenesc gata să își asume o misiune a liberei și eficientei comunicări publice.

Cuvinte-cheie: legitimitate catodică, democrație reprezentativă, societate informațională, cyberdemocrație, gândire în rețea, democrație deliberativă, cetățenie, cultură politică

Abstract: The deliberative form of modern Western democracies (now a desideratum, rather than a social reality of the post-communist Eastern Europe) constitutes, at the moment, an opportunity in researchers' debates and academic writings, and is less subject to practice. The representative manner to be “participating” in the affairs of the “city” is very widespread in the societies with liberal, pluralist claims, and already

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announces a crisis of structure: the elected by equal vote (knowingly or as a consequence of misinformation, intoxication, manipulation) are abusing, under the protection of the legislation in force, the conferred legitimacy and they frequently “forget” to represent the interests of the electorate won by promises, and avoid self-responsibility, thus raising currents favourable to the replacement of representativeness (more and more bureaucratic and formal) by a method of direct involvement in the “deep and continuous democratisation”. In a public sphere that is irrevocably publicised (up to “telecracy” and “pollocracy”), in the absence of a citizen-press partnership in which “catholic democracy” would serve rather the public opinion than the politicians, the electronic arena fills the classical dialogic deficits, and is populated with actors of citizen journalism ready to assume a mission of free and efficient public communication.

Keywords: catholic legitimacy, representative democracy, information society, cyberdemocracy, network thinking, deliberative democracy, citizenship, political culture

Résumé: La forme délibérative des démocraties modernes occidentaux (qui sont devenues plus tôt désir que réalité sociale dans L’Est post-communiste de L’Europe) constitue, en ce moment là, une opportunité dans les débats et les études académiques et moins peu l’objet de la pratique. La manière représentative d’être „participant” à les affaires de la “cité” est fixée dans les sociétés avec des prétentions libérales, pluralistes, elle déjà en annonçant une crise de structure: les élus par le vote (en connaissance ou par la conséquence d’informations déficitaires, de l’intoxications, de la manipulation) abusent sous la protection de la justice de la légitimité conférée et ils oublient fréquemment de représenter les intérêts d’un électorat conquis par des promesses, ils évitent leur propre responsabilité provoquant ainsi des mouvement d’opinion avantageuses pour substituer la représentativité (tout à fait bureaucratique et formelle) par la modalité d’implication directe pour “la démocratisation profonde et continue”. Dans une sphère publique irrévocablement médiatisée (jusqu’à “télécratie” et “sondocratie”), sans un partenariat citoyen-médias dans lequel la “démocratie cathodique” vient de servir surtout l’opinion publique que les politiciens, “l’amphithéâtre” électronique supplée les déficits de dialogue classique, arène populeuse par des acteurs social media prêts d’assumer une mission, communiquer libre et efficace.

Mots-clefs: légitimité cathodique, démocratie représentative, société informationnelle, cyberdémocratie, pensée en réseaux, démocratie délibérative, citoyenneté, culture politique

If democracy would imply degrees of comparison, as the superlative proves to be utopian and inoperable in the societal domain, we wouldn’t be far from the truth indicating the participatory state as the target of the regime that declares the reign of the people as the rule of the game... The public opinion’s investiture with the mission of “selection criterion” in the political “jungle”, especially in electoral years or campaigns, gives the media an even more hunted

role in shaping currents of opinion, in promoting some patterns of thought and action, in establishing the expectancies of the electorate (and of the press, of course!) – legitimacy guaranteed in the logic of mass communication’s mechanism. Along with the passing of generational thresholds (Fidler 2004:20-23), with the accumulation of a democratic experience marked by postmodern features, the strategic differences are visible for the analysts of the phenomenon of democracy establishment: political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, public communication practitioners etc. The image surpasses the essence (depth), the speech sends the ideas into desuetude, the promotion replaces the act... Charisma (in tandem with the scarcity of strategies and political culture) seduces the necessary number of electors, so that, within the margin of error, would win the favourite candidate of a simple majority of the voters, fewer and fewer themselves, ready to honour their constitutional right to participate in the establishment of power within the limits of the mandate provided by the law.

According to the author of a relatively recent *Mass-Media Sociology (Sociologia mass-media)*, Rémy Rieffel, the variables considered classical in the economy of voting (socio-demographic characteristics, political preferences, religious beliefs) appear constrained by “communicational” variables: the image of political parties in the eyes of the voter, the reflection of the personality of political actors, the perception of the election’s stakes (Rieffel 2008:34). It cannot be neglected, though, the level of political culture of those called to vote, knowing the fact that the media doesn’t have exclusive rights in forming a citizen properly to electoral moments (even as a host preferred for speeches and political debates, “tribune” of assiduous promotion of the qualities selected by the teams specialised in political marketing which are around the candidates; the groups of equals, family, leaders of opinion from outside the media culture impregnate the electoral “territory” with elements needful to the legitimacy of applying the stamp on the ballot paper). More recently, the social networks, what we call “citizen journalism” direct the citizen of the twenty-first century in the jungle of political life, up to the conviviality with the person wishing for public office, in the spirit of the “electronic democracy” that generates atypical presidents for North America, for example... Reconfiguring the dialogue, once “face to face”, by the consumption of content of the politicians’ blog or posting as “friend” in the Facebook “club”, the new communicational method (also not exceeding the “edges” of Sappho’s generation) shows postmodern avatars of electors and elected. Decreasing for Western democracies such as France, “the participatory democracy” maintained by the Internet conserves the “fever of the East”, for a short time an actor of the European Union. Apart from the loss of curiosity for a novel “toy” in the socio-political field, we are dealing with differences of access to New Communication Technologies (however paradoxical it may seem for our times), with different

levels of culture among the electorate, even at ages at which the presence is no longer mandatory...

“The shock of coverage” to which liberal democracies have been subjected to for decades brings into discussion the opportunities and the threats of a marketing communication still in trend: politics as a spectacle; the “sweetening” of political debates up to the predictable consensus and the cancellation of any shadow of disagreement; the extremely condensed chronological stakes (no one thinks long term, the pleasure of waiting for the fruits of the inspired strategies no longer exists); the persuasion, mostly free of elegance, from where the nostalgia for interwar politics, for the special style that renowned state people, negotiators etc. (Rieffel 2008:35). The “democratic malfunctions” stated call on a necessary stop upon the functioning of contemporary democracy in relation with the “democracy of opinion” assiduously cultivated by mass communication together with the adjacent “pollocracy” (Giovanni Sartori’s expression in *Homo videns. Imbecilizarea prin televiziune și postgândirea*).

Remembering somehow the beginnings of the press written in Hexagon centuries ago, the trajectory of last century’s ‘70s regarding the presence of intellectuals’ discourse in mass communication ensures the partnership between the academic field and publications, radio, television. After a generation of professors influential in the mechanism of Western public opinion (through expertise, activism, civic responsibility etc.), as soon as the Second World War was exhausted, the researchers and academic connoisseurs of social phenomena “descend” in the media otherwise than in specialised publications or from the area of quality generalist media. Strengthening, for a generation, the status of “legitimacy auxiliary” especially as a “man of the written word”, the intellectual of “the ’68 years” finds its way in the public debates with topical subjects and of major interest, making use of competence and authority, from the position of “a scholar in the situation of a politician” (Pascal Ory). As Raymond Aron considered (*L’opium des intellectuels*), someone’s cultural-creative proximity creates for him the aura of the thorough intellectual, and this is the mobile of the known typology of intellectuals, in which, on four levels, we find: artists, scholars, writers; researchers, critics, teachers; sources of information in general, journalists; engineers, jurists, in one word, the practitioners.

The last decades of the twentieth century suggest to the “academics” the audio-visual environment for participating in a public space still hungry for leaders with scientific foundation and reputation, notoriety etc. In the ironic spirit of a Pierre Bourdieu, the new generation of “media intellectuals” occupies the TV studios in a novel symbiosis of show moderators and experts in different fields. Facilitated by the “mosaic culture” (A. Moles), the cohabitation between intellectuals and decision makers in the media culture transmits the dependency of social values, ideas, practices on the preferences of the media logics; one exists,

matters (equally man or works) if and only if the media echo “talks” about it... The sympathy (purest case of pragmatism?) with which experts are welcomed by televisual formats and their “administrators” serves (if we were to analyse the honouring of the classical functions of mass communication) to the consuming public of the end of the twentieth century; in fact, the strategy of press people undoubtedly includes the moderators, producers, cultural managers aiming for public loyalty and winning a successful audience of the media, but also a convenient unwinding for those who could hardly design a fast academic career, and that publishers no longer privileged, inclined towards publishing trendy writings (marketing, literature of popularising different brand new domains or with an embellished look...). Therefore, the place of the “standard” intellectual (coming, every now and then, with ideas, explanations, perspectives – to an often exclusive audience) is occupied by the “media professional intellectual” or loved by the media as much as to become the image of a TV station, of a socio-cultural movement etc.

R. Rieffel sees intellectuals as either prey to the mirage of TV image, or recanting a seductive, but superficial environment (compared to written press), some tempted by neutrality (in order to not lose neither the “fashion”, nor a reputation acquired with toil and patience). At least in the French space, these mutations reverse the Aronian hierarchy that brings in a superior position television stars, journalists, vulgarisers; then the researchers from medicine and biology, for example; teachers (from sociologists and historians to “philosophers”); and, finally, writers (who live the twilight of their influence in the threshold of the millennium).

As one can easily see, the “catholic legitimacy” increases, public opinion has an even heavier say in the “city affairs”, the final judges of societal performances are no longer, not by far, the renowned authors, the leaders of opinion schooled by old canons; another generation, the same expectations of the social environment dominated by the means of mass communication... The confrontation of the “intellectual configuration” with the “journalistic” one is well known by the advantage of the latter (Beaud, Flichy, Pasquier, Quere 1997: 673-687), as the “mandarins” will now be defeated by the “merchants” (Fr. Balle). The (rhetorical) question about the possibility of such an outcome has a rough answer: the employees of some too clever traders of information apply the rules of profit despite the figure of the sober, balanced, decent with media appearances intellectual. The “young wolves” in the press and their mature colleagues that are converted to the market logic dethrone without regrets a category-source of contents, giving satisfaction to the “mass society” with a special profile. After generations wearing the mark of J.P. Sartre, M. Foucault, R. Barthes, the voices of contemporary sociology justify exigencies of audiovisual media such as: targeting a large audience, through the inclusion of culture in mainstream editorial policies (at the risk of the televised cultural offer at hours of deep sleep for the globalised

Western man - C. Clément) and cultivating the spectacle as a mean of immediate, pleasant, effortless internalisation of the necessary, cultural contents (D. Wolton). Maintaining the culture vs. television debate does nothing but vindicate, again and again, the conclusions of Umberto Eco, firmly arbitrating between paleo-television and neo-television, of effect, of the show, lacking the needed succession, the welcomed guides, the depth (Eco 2008:21-39).

It is known, in the attempt to decide: television or/and culture? Èric Maigret oscillates between culture and “mediaculture”, characterising the new “trend” of doing audio-visual communication as: “Deeply syncretic, plural [...], prototype of a «mediaculture», new form of political and aesthetic mediation which doesn't insist mainly on a culture of hierarchy, on the separation between art and communication (Maigret 2007:132).

This new form of a participatory culture in which the public is invited to animate the contents, serving as a gateway for any other means of communication, in other words „media à tout faire” (debates, information, entertainment of all sorts), not only an aesthetics of everyday life (È. Maigret), brings together: oral culture, mythic structures, innovations in form, irony, intertextuality, therefore most of the old and new ways to give meaning to culture (U. Eco).

The becoming of the media in the form of the new means of mass communication (especially after 1990) brings into play new logics of the individual and of community. It's not only about a capitalist manner of production and consumption of information (effective and, as much as possible, free), but also about the hope in a society in which exchanges can be egalitarian (horizontal, in the form of the network). Taken from the economic field of the '70s, individualism, working in temporary teams, implementation of projects with a non-recurrent nature (hence, suppleness and flexibility, but while maintaining hierarchies) transfer into “theoretical horizontality” – exclusive and less transparent, forcing the borders between the private and the public sphere; a hybridity that came in the cultural area from recognised industrial structures. Without declaring itself hostile to mass media, “the network of the networks” – Internet – asserts itself as “privacy media”, in which emotions and confessions take the place of social representation and already classicised socialisation. The “expressive turn” of society brought into debate by Charles Taylor, together with the “technologies of the Self” (Foucault) and the “reflexivity” of Ulrich Beck “processed” by a Laurence Allard in a dispersion of “small expressive digital forms”, “aesthetic and identity bricolages”, the practical synthesis of “expressive individualism” at the heights of globalisation translates the users of the new communication technologies as totally permeable to themselves, but to the others too, in an impulse beyond mere exposure, giving them the status of relays of transmitting-acquiring information, communicational “nodes” (more than issuers and receivers of messages), channels in the circulation of contents, “fragments” of a movement of exit from the self and

the traditional environment of communication (Maigret, 2007:264), all under the rule of the central instance of postmodernity, the Ego!

In a true “e-mail nationalism”, the dialogue with other is not anarchic, as soon as there is evidence of contacting prevalently those known in the real, “old” existence. Choosing the “communicational buddies” proves to be tributary to the Goffmanian viewpoints about the “daily life as a spectacle”, including “the patterns of exchange” and “presentation of self”; the groups formed as a result of chance gain an unexpected weight, due to the common experience and the similar interests in the mechanism of cultural and informational trade: cancels the barrier issuer-receiver of message; creates a common denominator of tastes and expectancies by the decision made together.

The “distant and narrow” sociability in traditional media use is converted into “the fans community”, “the list of friends on the net”, resulting in the exemplary mobilisation of some quasi-strangers moved by the same incentives (the call for the winter 2012 protests in Romania through Facebook, for example). Filling the gap of participation in democracy, the convenience of belonging to the public space through simple *likes*, photos, comments on personal websites (blogs) gives the Internet the force of “individual and group expression”, favouring the celerity of reactions, the stakes of amateurism, anonymity masked in avatars, the confessing impulses. Reunions of the “fans” that are in countercultural positions take even more courage; there indurates the idea of a novel form of public space, where there is space and time for everyone...

Politically, the Internet counterbalances the discomfort caused by the “institutional dysfunction”, adds a significant content to “the teledemocracy” of the 70’s-’80s, “reinvents” practices of citizenship, modernises the social environment. Phrases like “cyberdemocracy”, “electronic democracy” enter the current vocabulary and provide proof for the applications in the politician of the time’s arena: the dialogue with politicians is consumed on the blog, public debates take place on forums, sanctioning the slippages of the elected is “posted” and “annotated” instantly...all of these in the pattern of the “strong democracy” with visible elements of “direct and unanimously” - Benjamin Barber - (Maigret 2007: 266).

Researches dating from the ninth decade warn against the unjustified optimism of the major consequences in “electronic democracy”: the expectancies of direct democracy are not confirmed, accessibility to information remains a desideratum in enough matters, the latest generation technique doesn’t automatically smooth interpersonal relationships; the representation principle rather works in the delicate field of politics; the power is preserved in a political system centred on the tough separation between elected and citizens (according to the principle of delegation). The “matter” of electronic democracy (with the refinements of its mechanisms) gets extra meaning in the generous context of

public space transformation and of the postmodern becoming of citizenship. What U. Beck noticed twenty years ago – the “desuetude” of experts’ monopoly on knowledge, the remoteness from the classical way of the “rational” decision through the globalisation of actions and the “absence of consequences’ exteriority” – manifest themselves (although in still fragile forms) nowadays: the debates and solutions to “problems of the city” exceed the traditional “hosts” such as the parliament and the government (exponents of the purely representative democracy); the access of the individual-citizen to information no longer goes through the interpretative “grid” of the specialised communicators (the journalists) in most situations; hence the re-distribution of authority in the “information society”, the complexity of practices in an environment converted to quasi-limited freedom, celerity, interaction, critical attitude, the protection of anonymity, in one word, participation (or at least the illusion of deliberative democracy).

James Carey and Alberto Melucci analyse the right of contemporary democratisation’s actors to depart from the mass mobilisation pattern of the last two centuries, in tandem, though, with the expansion of “media representation” and the exploitation of pluralism’s stakes. The ideals of a “continuous and deliberative” democracy, supported by technicist utopias, challenge the researchers concerned with “digital cities”, “digital tools”, “cyberdemocracy”, “network thinking”, all in the spirit of a “personal and collective flourishing of a deep democracy” (Stephen Coleman) which cannot be the vulgarised, sudden consequence of some latest generation technologies’ “diffusion miracle”. The policy of the small steps in the beneficial transformation of the representation and decision-making structures will sediment the big expectations towards deliberative democracy, currently regarded as saviour for an increasingly active and involved globalised citizen of the Earth...

Generated by a real “crisis of representation” through the acute distancing of power from the society, the political picture of liberal democracies after the ‘90s of the recently ended century highlights the erosion through legitimacy deficit, “the indisposition” in political representation (P. Rosanvallon), “the illness” of Western democracy maintained by the hyper-media coverage of the political field (R. Barre), the revolutionary “handling” of the suspicions of weak citizen participation precisely with media tools and recipes (D. Wolton). The diagnosis claimed by symptoms of an “irreversible distortion” in the “body” of representative democracy is the subject of a “recoding of the symbolic device of politics” (Lecomte 2004:10). Operationalisation of some unconscious psychological mechanisms and of the latent social effects, communication the societal frames of the Batesonian orchestra sends to what D. Bounoux called “the un-thought of communication”, that bridge between the individual and the others, not fully belonging either to the individual, or to the community, but indispensable to the relationship, as “No one can be built upon itself, or to live alone, but from, or through, and firstly *for*: someone, a project, even a (self) image” (Lecomte 2004:29).

Social identification, approached also as an integration issue, forces, beyond chronological, ideological, mentalist exigencies, in fact, the re-living of the dilemma individuality-community: condition of self becoming strictly through the reflection in the existence of the significant.

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