

Viorel Vizureanu

(Editor)

**Re-thinking the Political
in Contemporary Society:
Globalization, Consumerism,
Economic Efficiency**

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Economic Efficiency**



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Editor's Foreword

The present volume is the result of the extremely dense and enthusiastic activity of a research team from the SOP HRD/159/1.5/S/133675 Project “*Innovation and development in structuring and representing knowledge through doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships (IDSRC – doc postdoc)*”, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch. The team had as its principal research objective the investigation of what we called *the re-thinking of the political in contemporary society*, with particular attention paid to *globalization, consumerism*, and the grid of *economic efficiency* imposed today all over the world.

I consider that the volume as a whole and each study in particular should be left to speak for themselves. However, I think that some general explanations and a minimal presentation of the contributions will be of real help to the reader.

As will be seen, the authors aim to focus their contributions – but not exclusively – on the elements that generated a rapid and often uncritical and brutal reconfiguration of the political in the past decades: a) globalization, which – through the mobility (voluntary or forced) of individuals and capital, through the Internet and the new digital media – affects the mode of participation in the political space; b) consumption / consumerism, which both theoretically and practically is becoming the decisive social component by which citizens are judging the quality of today's democracy, representing also the means by which political participation is handled and often clouded; c) economic efficiency, which – through neoliberal policies, outsourcing and privatization and through the competition between states – was recently established as the quasi-universal criterion by which the public sectors (such as education or health system) and their relations with the citizens are reshaped. To these we shall add such indisputable phenomena as accelerated environmental degradation, moral drift in all social categories, violent cultural uprooting caused by secularism etc.

A special interest was given to the phenomena linked with the process of globalization. Some of the authors analyzed how political and cultural elements, trends and forces are interfering in explanations of the contemporary phenomenon of globalization, which is considered to be decisive. They started from the observation that globalization is not only the fundamental cause which determines the emergence of new realities in the two basic registers of human behavior, but also the effect of profound changes taking place in social, cultural

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and political spheres. This also means to envisage in a dynamic perspective the economic phenomena that globalization is often reduced to, a perspective in which the economic factors are in a continuous interaction with the cultural and political ones. After all, at the end of such an analysis we might find that one of the distinguishing features of today's globalization is precisely the impossibility to entirely separate from a theoretical perspective these factors that contribute to determine a complex and continuously changing reality. As we fixed in the title of the team's exploratory workshop that constituted the basis for this volume, there is an "interplay" between the political and the cultural (but also the economic, the social, etc.) in the globalization process. This is the difficulty, but also the challenge – and, why not, the chance – of this kind of investigation. The fact that the authors investigated – often in a philosophical manner – the *political* and not only the *politics* clearly expresses this fundamental hypothesis.

However, the plurality of perspectives the political could be approached from is obvious. Far from being a methodological failure or deficiency, this is in our opinion an argument for the richness of the topic – and also of its scholarly urgency. A brief review of the main ideas discussed by the authors in this volume will be an evidence for supporting the above statement and of help for the lecturer.

Corina Barbaros' study addresses deliberative democracy from a critical perspective, highlighting the benefits of the deliberative turn. Among these benefits the study includes: community-generating power, improving the accuracy of decisions, democratic legitimation of political power, democratic accountability, shaping policy by market-testing, informing about public policy process. But – Barbaros stresses – beyond the advantages of deliberative democracy which are recognized by most scholars, the issue of the possibility of real-world deliberative democracy still remains. Her study presents a series of possibility conditions for unrolling deliberative democracy and several models of deliberation that can be extended (deliberative polls, citizens' juries, national issues forums, referenda). She particularly discusses the deliberative democracy's scale problem. The most important research questions in her present study are: How do we go from micro to macro-deliberation? Who is entitled to a say? What counts as good discourse and deliberation? How can citizen deliberation have consequences in democratic practice? The main idea is that in practice deliberative democracy implies a rethinking of politics and its feasibility is part of its desirability.

In his "The Aesthetics of Existence and the Political in Late Foucault", Daniel Nica gives a political reading of Michel Foucault's "aesthetics of existence", by discussing the social commitment of Foucauldian ethics, and by

interpreting his ethical project as a means of political resistance. After briefly reconstructing Foucault's thought as a constant inquiry into the problem of subjectivity, the author answers the accusation of narcissism and individualism received by the French thinker with respect to his late work. Daniel Nica's strategy to answer this accusation is to highlight the political engagement of the aesthetics of existence, by showing how it infuses a politics of minimizing domination. The conclusion is that – far from being a contemporary version of dandyism, as P. Hadot claimed – the aesthetics of existence is a social activity in which self-transformation aims at transforming an intolerable political order.

In contemporary western societies third wave feminism has developed as a pluralist and anti-essentialist political perspective on the female subject in relation to systems of power. Due to its vehement assertion of agency and free choice, this new type of feminism has encompassed a variety of forms of female representations. In the context of the emergent phenomenon of consumerism, corporate feminism has developed as a self-proclaimed by-product of the third wave discourse, reclaiming social justice for women through the mechanisms of consumption. In this ideatic context, Venera Dimulescu proposes a critical evaluation of the political discourse of corporate feminism, focusing on the deconstruction of the act of consumption as a means to female emancipation and gender equality. Presuming that the principle of dialogue in transversal politics – the grass roots political project of the third wave – is the fundamental step towards social change, the author argues that the universal act of consumption cannot offer women the social and political chance to collectively explore their experiences. Moreover it engages them in a passive position towards the real issues of women's contemporary forms of oppression within societies. The act of consumption becomes a mere artifice in the process of self-creation while traditional systems of power still generate gender inequalities.

The main aim of Viorel Vizureanu's paper is to focus on certain general philosophical presuppositions, some explicit, many others hidden, involved in several explanatory approaches of a democracy that seems more and more built in the name and for the sake of consumption and the neoliberal agenda. Without attempting to exhaust the topic, he tries however to highlight some theoretical constants (the ludic character, mobility, etc.) that could help in shaping a veritable model of human subjectivity in today's society, at least from the point of view of this kind of theorizations. He named this model one of a *post-post-modern* kind, i.e. one that wants to synthetically incorporate the 'advantages' of both the instrumental rationality of modernity and the playful creativity of postmodernity. He also points out sketchily the possibility of an

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ideological use of this model, due to the fact that it seems to represent more an uncritical projection and an illicit extrapolation from certain social Western categories, than a universal human reality. For that last particular reason Vizureanu affirms that this kind of analysis has not only a theoretical descriptive role, but also a practical tenure.

In his contribution “The Transhumanist Project: Some Questions and a Political Reading”, Dorian Vlădeanu tackles the subject of transhumanism. According to the supporters of transhumanism, people can and must be transformed, sooner or later, into beings with expanded skills to the extent they will no longer be human beings, as we actually know them. After a brief history and some preliminary reflections on humanism, Dorian Vlădeanu addresses a series of political questions regarding the transhumanist project. The main concern about transhumanism lies in the possibility that it might increase the gap between the rich and the poor. Dorian Vlădeanu ends his paper by suggesting that permanent criticism of potential dangers in our society is the essential condition of our political future.

Political violence plays a significant role in public affairs and people's behavior. Therefore, rigorous research is required into many of its occurrences and its consequences for the proper management, organization, and functioning of society as a whole. This will lead to a greater level of knowledge regarding the subject. In the paper “Redefining politics – violence and fear in contemporary society”, Catrinel Grosu chooses to analyze politics in connection to fear and violence. Her paper presents a large range of ideas and themes regarding the role and functions of political power, demonstrating the types of political violence and their consequences for the management and functioning of society.

The purpose of Anabella-Maria Târnovan's contribution is to discuss the potential of communication networks for social change and development in the digital age through a social capital lens. In doing so, she complements both social capital and communication for social change theory by introducing a critical communicative perspective of social capital while discussing the reconfiguration of social capital around networks of communication in a digitalized world. Firmly anchored in general theories of social capital, the network society paradigm (Manuel Castells) and the communicative action theory (Jürgen Habermas), her approach is hoped to contribute to the understanding of the social capitalization process in the newly emerged network society, constructed around networks powered by communication. It is herewith argued that one of the major changes brought about by the development of information communication technologies and particularly of social media is the

empowerment of collaborative social relationships and networks constructed communicatively, what Anabella-Maria Târnovan has called the empowerment of communicative social capital.

In his paper, Constantin Vică proposes a new critical argument against open data claims and the (digital) culture of openness expressed by this global political movement. He starts by explaining the meaning, use and dual nature – political and technological – of open data in order to draw the ideological position enthusiasts, experts, amateurs and administration clerks inscribe in. Freedom of information and freedom of access are two main categories of this stance that the author calls „a liberation ideology”. After exposing the global expansion of open government and legislative data, and the standard arguments of the debate – grouped around the question „is open data a real way to open government?” –, the author proceeds with his original philosophical inquiry. Firstly, he shed light on the limits of open data in rethinking politics within the frame of deliberative and epistemic democracy, which is an ideal political theory. He concludes that there is no causal direct relationship between open data and political decisions, but he grants a task for it in better grounding deliberation. Secondly, Constantin Vică offers an epistemological critical vision of open data using the contemporary approach to knowledge construed as a result of semantic information. In conclusion, the quest for open data is not producing a new way of doing politics in our real representative democracies.

Radu Uszkai’s study aims at reconstructing a critique of the globalization of Intellectual Property (IP) rights from two (apparently) antagonistic perspectives: libertarian and Rawlsian. The main hypothesis tested here is whether the libertarian critique of IP globalization is compatible with the Rawlsian prerequisites for Global Justice. If successful, the study conveys the fact that the Bleeding Heart Libertarian (BHL) perspective is also applicable to rights in ideal objects. Uszkai’s inquiry starts with an analysis of the evolution of IP at the national and international level. It then proceeds by illustrating the most powerful arguments in favor of IP: the Lockean natural rights theory and the utilitarian/consequentialist theory. Afterwards, it evaluates this arguments in the light of libertarian and Rawlsian moral and political philosophy. Last but not least, his study ends with an evaluation of the possibility of integrating Rawlsian intuitions regarding inequality in a libertarian perspective.

The purpose of Sebastian Enea’s study is to provide answers to two research questions, namely *What are the foundations of the economic and political dimensions of globalization, in terms of major determinants?* and secondly, *What is the best globalization index, in terms of composition, robustness and analysis accuracy?*. The conducted analysis has proven that

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globalization is not a strictly economic phenomenon, but it requires a multi-disciplinary approach, focusing also on political, cultural and social issues, in order to provide a broader understanding of the concept. Secondly, the results of the study have underlined the fact that using aggregate indexes for assessing the impact of globalization on society in general is a well-founded approach, which can offer interesting conclusions. Furthermore, the KOF Globalization Index represents one of the best indexes, in terms of robustness and accuracy, due mainly to its construction methodology and the analysis possibilities it provides (longer period of study and a bigger number of research entities).

Costel Matei approaches the traditional liberal political theory that has at its core the idea that states have full freedom and the obligation to pursue pragmatic interests on the international relations scene. In these terms, the author tries to demonstrate that we can talk about justice at a national level, but a discussion of international justice seems to be required. In his terms, global justice is denied by the supporters of the idea of political realism or neorealism because they have a strict conception of international relations and obligations of States: the main obligation of States applies only to the citizens they lead, and in international relations characterized by anarchy, they must act in the name of national interests. However, Costel Matei tries to analyze political realism and neorealism in order to demonstrate that these theories do not offer strong enough conceptual arguments for justifying the rejection of global justice. Furthermore, he manages to highlight the theoretical connections that can be identified between the international relations theories that are based on the principles of political realism and cosmopolitan projects which support the theoretical possibility of global justice. His study also aims to underline the possibility of some compatibilities between the neorealist conceptions and the contemporary cosmopolitan theories and to argue that concepts like prudence, attention, power, distrust etc. are not the only virtues of the foreign policy, the only standards used on the evaluation of successful policies.

The main idea of Laura Cuciurianu's paper is that the causes and consequences of the process of globalization are changing the international system and relations as well as the negotiations of international trade agreements, such as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), changes which are happening due to the effects of globalization that are changing the global governance and the international trade. In order to find the connections between globalization and the negotiations for the free trade agreements, her paper tries to explain the role of free trade agreements, such as Trans-Pacific Partnership and Transatlantic

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Trade and Investment Partnership, in the context of globalization. The contribution is divided into three main parts: in the first one Laura Cuciurianu presents various definitions of the process of globalization throughout history, its economic and political dimensions, and also some different perspectives on the future of globalization in the global trade. In the second part of her paper she highlights the most important aspects of the TTIP and the relation between it and the concept of globalization. More precisely, it must be seen if launching the negotiations on the TTIP can be justly considered as an effect of globalization. Finally, the third section offers a necessary comparative perspective on the two most important free trade agreements of the 21st century, TTIP and TPP.

*

In the end, I would like to warmly thank some of the contributors to this volume, who played also a significant role in checking and improving the quality of other edited papers of the volume: Daniel Nica, Constantin Vică, Corina Barbaros. But all the authors deserve appreciation for their sustained effort performed in a relatively short time of scientific research. I also want to express sincere thoughts of gratitude especially to Cristina Voinea who – with great solicitude and promptitude – thoroughly checked and proposed real improvements for many of the present contributions. Last but not least I want to express my thanks to Dorian Vlădeanu, the other supervisor of our research group, who – despite some problems he was confronting with at the time – personally checked and evaluated part of the studies of this volume, thus proving his professional expertise and openness for those he guided.

Viorel Vizureanu

I. New Models for the Political

A Critical Perspective on Deliberative Democracy and Its Implications*

Corina Barbaros

Is Deliberative Democracy Just an Ideal?

Reassigning the democratic theory in light of the deliberative turn is very much a work in progress for the community of democratic theorists. Using a simple definition, deliberative democracy refers to a democratic government that provides a central role for rational debate. What do we mean by deliberation? Deliberation will be an unrestrained and free exchange of arguments and practical reasoning that could change preferences and opinions. Two issues related to deliberative democracy already arise. Even if public deliberation in this regard is aimed to a rational agreement, it is likely that it will fail in reaching a consensus. Another issue related to public deliberation advanced by many authors is the cognitive dimension involved and the inquiry whether deliberation's intent is to generate a particular type of knowledge or not.

There is an obvious attraction to democratic deliberation in democracy theory literature, and the use of "deliberative" attribute by John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas to describe their normative conceptions of democracy (even different) is an additional proof to the current popularity of the concept. Why deliberative democratic model is more desirable than a non-deliberative model? This study seeks to establish the benefits of the main arguments advanced in favor of the current conception of deliberative democracy. We agree with Robert Goodin (2012) who summarizes the issues involved by deliberative democracy as in the following lines:

Democracy should be designed in such a way as to encourage people to come together to discuss common problems and agree

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to solutions; as to enable citizens to see things from each other's point of view, understanding others' interests and arguments as well as one's own; as to encourage citizens to engage actively with one another in the joint management of their collective affairs, and in that way to develop their own capacities and perspectives. (Goodin 2012, 2).

Scholars spotted and agreed about numerous benefits of deliberative democracy such as: community-generating power, improving the accuracy of decisions, democratic legitimation of political power, democratic accountability, shaping policy by market-testing, informing public policy process. All these merits and a few others will be synthesized in the next part of the study, and generally they are not a subject for debate or controversy. But besides the benefits afore mentioned is deliberative democracy just an ideal? Deliberative democracy movement is concerned with finding ways of putting the theory into practice. Scientists and political leaders have to find ways of connecting micro-deliberations to macro-political decision-making. There are some good practice models for public deliberations such as citizens' juries, consensus conferences, deliberative polls and others, which show how deliberative democracy could work in practice. But for deliberative democracy not to be just an ideal, we have to think about what counts as good deliberation, the effects of public deliberations and the influence of deliberations on decision-making process.

First, we have to clarify when deliberation begins. Some of deliberative democracy supporters prioritize "talking as a decision procedure", therefore discussion and deliberation are not simply an exchange of information but a procedure that leads to a decision. For others, deliberation consists principally in interpersonal communications; thus the discussion is not seen as an end in itself. It is a means to a more advised and consistent decision. Even when talk does not 'settle' things, it clarifies them. We will quote Goodin's ideas again, as we agree with the argument that deliberation has an internal-reflective sort of implication:

Internal-reflective processes of democratic deliberation within are relatively more central to the process of democratic deliberation, and external-collective processes of formal discursive interactions less central, than commonly supposed. (Goodin 2012, 51)

To clarify the main issues involved by deliberative democracy in practice and not just as an ideal, we should emphasize the fact that there are two stages within deliberation process: information phase and discussion phase. It is perfectly possible for deliberation to have a major effect even if it does not change any attitudes by strengthening people's confidence in their prior attitudes or emboldening them to act upon them. Let us suppose that instead of highly polarized symbolic attitudes, what we have is mass ignorance or mass apathy or non-attitudes. There again, "people's engaging with the issue – focusing on it, acquiring information about it, thinking hard about it – would be something that is likely to occur earlier rather than later in the deliberative process" (Goodin 2012, 59). It is something that is most likely to occur earlier within individuals themselves or in informal contacts, in advance of any formal, structured group discussion.

In order to become reality, we have to think of deliberative democracy as a model growing out from small-scale face-to-face interactions. In order to apply this model to a larger scale, a new institutional structure is required. The main aim for deliberative democrats is to find ways of linking the benefits of small-scale deliberation with the decision-making process for larger-scale societies. One way for deliberative democracy to be more than an ideal is to build a micro-deliberation system into the core of the formal decision-making process of the larger society (Mansbridge's approach). Another way is to create a link between micro-deliberations and the formal decision-making procedures in more diffuse ways such as something more akin to 'market-testing': will this idea sell or not? Thus the deliberation will be a marketing tool but also a deliberative one (Dryzek's approach). All the issues afore mentioned will be detailed later in the study.

First question for any democratic theory is who is included in the political arena. The same issue arises within deliberative democracy. Who gets a say or, to put it differently, who is entitled to speak? The answer to this question should solve the legitimacy problem of deliberative democracy. For some authors such as Schumpeter (2003, 5) "the characteristics (...) associated with democracy pertain purely to how decisions are made, not to who makes them", so there is no need to pay much attention to the legitimation problem. This study emphasizes the opposite perspective that considers legitimation of deliberative democracy a main concern and we will discuss this at length.

Moreover, the debates about deliberative democracy are controversial in what concerns methodological issues and the conditions for deliberative democracy's possibility. First, if deliberative democracy is a normative concept that emphasizes public reasoning is all the more important that it can be

defended on the basis of solid arguments. Secondly, we need arguments that can help us to make a rational choice between different models of deliberations that are offered today. As a conclusion of this brief introduction, we state that deliberative democracy can only complement rather than replace the institutional machinery of representative democracy and we have to keep this in mind for the deliberative democracy to be more than an ideal.

Arguments in Favor of Deliberative Democracy

This study agrees with the systematization of the arguments in favor of deliberative democracy made by Cooke (2000). The arguments, according to Cooke (2000, 951), focus on: (1) the *community-generating* power resulting from the process of public deliberation (2) the *educative* power of public deliberations (3) the public deliberations display a fair *procedure* of debate (4) the *outcomes* of public deliberation prove a superior epistemic quality, and (5) the ideal of politics articulated by deliberative democracy complies with human nature. In the following lines, I will detail Cooke's general arguments and add some new useful points in favor of deliberative democracy. We have to keep in mind the idea that even where these arguments offer solid motivations for preferring the deliberative ideal of democracy, there is still need for other aspects on putting deliberative democracy in practice to be fully convincing.

The first benefit of deliberative democracy relates to the education of citizens. The benefits of participation in public affairs are primarily personal and moral as participation involves practical and intellectual features. According to this assumption those who become involved not only become better citizens, but also better people. Here we have the educational role of public deliberation. Moreover, deliberative democracy seems to favor a community feeling. The arguments for this approach are promoted by authors favoring communitarian interpretations of deliberative democracy, for example, Benjamin Barber (1984). Communitarians emphasize that the common good which is usually accompanied by the argument that the individual will become aware and will be able to strengthen its participation within a collective form of life only through public reasoning methods with others who owe their identities to the same cultural background of values and traditions. A similar concern for public deliberation power to create (or strengthen) the community can be identified within liberal versions of deliberative democracy, for example, in Joshua Cohen's approach. He claims that by requiring justification in acceptable terms

to others, deliberative democracy achieves the ideal of community (Cohen 1996, 102).

The third argument in favor of deliberative democracy, stated by Cooke, is the fairness of the public deliberation's procedure. This argument can be summarized as follows: public deliberation procedure enhances the effects of the democratic process and makes it more fair. It is a strictly procedural approach. This argument is supported by Seyla Benhabib's and Joshua Cohen's democratic theories. The proceduralism's strict standards say that there are no non-procedural fair, the only acceptable standards are internal adjudication procedure itself. In other words, if the procedure is correct, the effect is correct. This view assumes that basic fairness democratic decisions are equally legitimate, if they are produced by a correct majority rule procedure. As advocates of deliberative democracy, Benhabib and Cohen complete this basic vision by including deliberation. For them, democratic decisions are fair and legitimate to the extent that they are correctly produced by deliberative procedures and forums. Cohen, for example, in support of the previous ideas writes that "democratic procedures are the source of legitimacy" (Cohen 1997, 73).

In contrast to the third argument which blames the quality of public deliberation democratic decisions and qualifies them as being less reasoned, this argument distinguishes between fairness and rationality of the decision procedure. Independent epistemic standards are stated as to achieve quality results deliberation. We call on Habermas's theory of deliberative democracy to justify this argument. According to Habermas's theory (1996), public deliberations have a cognitive dimension: they are concerned with finding the best ways to improve public affairs, and the best method is evaluated with reference to standards of rationality that have some objectivity.

The last general argument in favor of deliberative democracy is the congruence of the ideal of politics expressed by deliberative democracy with the human nature. This argument has two main elements: a) there are some key concepts about knowledge, about self and the welfare that are central to Western tradition of thinking and modern history, and their rejection is not a matter of simple decision but it would require a fundamental shift in our thinking, and b) deliberative model of democracy is most compatible with these normative conceptions.

My discussion of deliberative democracy aims to show that discursive accountability is the deliberative-democratic alternative for classical democratic accountability. We will explore the possibilities of network-based model of accountability with a special reference to voluntary associations of civil society and digital citizenship. As Seyla Benhabib writes:

It is through the interlocking net of these multiple forms of associations, networks, and organizations that an anonymous “public conversation” results. It is central to the model of deliberative democracy that it privileges such a public sphere of mutually interlocking and overlapping networks and association of deliberation, contestation and argumentation. (Benhabib 1996, 73-4)

This type of accountability is also an argument in favor of deliberative democracy. Every time we speak about accountability we refer to a concept that takes three-part predicate: the accountability is of some agent to some other agent for some state of affairs (Goodin 2012, 156). Political accountability is the one of elected officials to their electorates for their performance in office. Besides this classical type of political accountability, we have new political-style mechanisms of accountability, the so-called *new public management theories*. The latter speak about reinvented government and joined-up government. New public management replaces, or supplements, the traditional vertical accountability with new forms of horizontal recognition. That horizontal model re-construes “the accountability as (...) responsiveness, obligation and willingness to communicate with others’ across the various agencies constituting the relevant community policy responsible for *the joint-up government*, and service delivery in that sphere” (Considine 2002, 21).

Democracy means being systematically responsive to citizens’ desires and interests. The main political mechanism of democratic accountability is electoral, with politicians being called to account to voters at periodic elections in which the sovereign electorate has an opportunity to sanction them, but besides that there are various complementary layers of political accountability. One of these layers is discursive-accountability specific to deliberative democracy which can be very effective.

Beyond these general benefits of deliberative democracy, we focus on the benefits of micro-deliberations which might expand and relate to the decision-making process. So the question will be how might mini-publics affect political decision-making? It proves hard to trace the direct impact of any particular input. A possible pathway to influence might be when a forum is formally empowered as part of a decision-making process. When a mini-public provides recommendations to ordinary macro-political process, with no formal guarantee that the recommendations will be taken any further. Sometimes, micro-deliberations might have the role of *informing public debates* and a major goal will be to provide information. The information will flow both to those

involved directly in the policy debates and to larger publics. Another benefit of micro-deliberations might be *shaping policy by market-testing*. Politicians need to market-test their proposals too. The important question to which mini-publics can provide an answer is: can we sell this to the public, however hard we try, however much we increase public understanding? Even, or perhaps especially, where the upshot of the market testing is a frustrating rejection, politicians are definitely better off admitting it to be a lost cause before risking too much of their images and political capital on it. And it is not useful just for politicians and their popularity. It is also useful for the macro-political system – in terms of its functionality, legitimacy, and democratic responsiveness – not to try to force unacceptable proposals of public policies. This way we come to another benefit namely the *legitimizing policy* provided by deliberative democracy. To this respect I quote Robert Dahl who says that “the judgments of a mini-populus would represent the judgment of the demos...and would thus derive their authority from the legitimacy of democracy” (Dahl 1989, 342).

Also, deliberative democracy will be a matter of *confidence-building*. Even if the procedures specific to deliberative democracy are consultative and advisory, the mobilization of people to participate and talk to each other often has two additional effects, both of which are of indirect political consequence. A first effect is a psychological boost in confidence to those who participate, as they acquire information and arguments in the course of engaging in the process of deliberation. According to the second sociological effect the people that were mobilized to take part in the consultative process will be able to exercise political pressure on the macro-political system in other ways than elections as well.

Given the many advantages and arguments in favor of deliberative democracy, we furthermore focus our attention on the possibility conditions of deliberative democracy and legitimacy of deliberative forums. In other words we approach the deliberative democracy’s legitimation and scale problems.

Conditions for Deliberative Democracy’s Possibility

As we already stated, the deliberative democracy feasibility is part of its desirability. This study focuses on two main aspects regarding the possibility of deliberative democracy: making use of mini-publics as John Dryzek insists and sequencing deliberative moments.

An important question that could lead us to the conditions for deliberative democracy’s possibility is how large groups of individuals could genuinely deliberate together? It seems that large groups could not have a

genuine deliberation, so we have to take into consideration courts, civil society, mass-mediated deliberation, e-networks and their mini-publics. These mini-publics are considered by Robert Goodin to be “small enough to be genuinely deliberative and representative enough to be genuinely democratic” (Goodin 2012, 13). These mini-publics seldom meet the statistical representativeness standards, and the representativeness in the electoral sense is never accomplished. Such mini-publics might be deliberative polls (Ackerman and Fishkin have an extensive approach of this topic), consensus conferences, citizens’ juries, planning cells, “AmericaSpeaks” a project that consisted in a series of 21st Century Town Meetings, national issues forums.

So, for deliberative democracy to be possible in real-world, we have to constitute micro-publics. But how do we constitute a micro-public? There are several proposals in order to constitute mini-publics. Some of them are proposals for electoral reforms, others concern improved consultative procedures, e-initiatives or instruments of direct democracy such as referenda. There is an element of self-selection in all deliberative microcosms: citizens must agree to participate. By consequence, micro-publics lack formal power or authority in the macro-political system. The principle of all affected interests, according to Dahl argues that “everyone who is affected by the decisions of a government should have the right to participate in that government” (Dahl 1970, 64). What is particular about mini-publics is that they neither claim electoral representation, nor statistical representativeness. The constitution of mini-publics will be a matter of selection among all the affected ones. Sometimes is difficult to deliberate even within a micro-public and a goal must be maintaining their focus on what united them. This is definitely a possibility condition for deliberative democracy.

In order for deliberative democracy to be possible, one should admit its limits. We must ask ourselves how, in general, political deliberations might contribute to the resolution of unsettled questions? Sometimes, desensitizing an issue might be a good outcome of a deliberation process, other times resolving the issue will be the goal. Where there are deep social divisions and conflicts the deliberative process is not likely to resolve the problems via information-pooling. In this case the benefit might be that talking through differences, we might find that there are certain prerequisites we share, and we can then look more closely at where exactly our approaches begin to diverge. Displaying chains of reasoning to one another in these ways shows everyone that one another’s beliefs are reasoned, even if they are not in the end persuaded that they are right. To this respect, Gutmann and Thompson write:

Think of the requirement of actual deliberation as analogous to a feature of scientific inquiry. Reciprocity is to justice in political ethics what replication is to truth in scientific ethics (...) The process of deliberation has (...) epistemic value. Decisions are more likely to be morally justifiable if decision-makers are required to offer justifications for policies to other people, including those who are both well informed and representative of the citizens who will be most affected by the decisions. (Gutmann and Thompson 2002, 158)

Deliberative democracy can be defined as information pooling by means of talk. My point is that if we were just pooling information in the more mechanistic ways, we might never discover that our informants were indeed biased in these ways. In other words an advantage of discursively rather than just mechanically pooling information is that that might help in reaching a consent and overcome the peril of a sequence of communication stages in which each is an exaggerated version of the last.

Since that discursive information-pooling usually needs to be done face-to-face, it is inevitably a small-scale enterprise. But macro-political decision-making process cannot be delegated to small groups of unelected deliberators. The decisions of small, unelected groups inevitably lack democratic legitimacy. Those micro-deliberative processes can be used as “focus groups” to help us discover discursively what further information we need to collect and disseminate to democratic decision-makers before mechanically aggregating their views. Thus we are in front of a new way to transform the ideal of deliberative democracy into practice.

Here one raises the question of how to link the micro-level with the macro-level? How citizens’ deliberation can be consequential in democratic practice? I have anticipated the answer in the first lines of this chapter: by sequencing deliberative moments. It is important to point out the possibility of *distributed deliberation* with different agents playing different deliberative roles as an alternative to the “unitary model of deliberation” that presently dominates discussion among deliberative democrats (for example Cohen’s deliberative democracy’s view is criticized for being too unitary). In distributed deliberation model, the deliberative virtues and arguments are on display progressively, over the course of a staged deliberation with various component parts, rather than continuously and simultaneously as they would be in the case

of a unitary deliberating model. In support of this perspective we have Mansbridge's notion of "deliberative system".

The *deliberative system* concept was advanced by Mansbridge (2004) whose concern was to criticize the rigorous and useless deliberative standards applied in places where there is no need for them. Mansbridge speaks about a deliberative system which includes a number of forums, a series of standards extended beyond formal representative structures to include the public and private spheres. What is interesting about Mansbridge's idea is that it offers a new way of thinking to deliberative democracy that helps us get out of the deliberative democracy's scale problem. It is true that genuine deliberation forums can only occur in small size, but the interrelationships between communication and representation, authority and accountability within such forums create legitimacy for deliberative democracy even if deliberative forums are not fully inclusive and representative.

A model of group deliberation based on distributed deliberation is given by the parliamentary procedures and their committees. These committees are small parts of the parent assembly. They deliberate on the issues assigned to them according to their specialization by the parent assembly. After they deliberate and reach a conclusion, they report back to the parent assembly, and their specialized reports will be a basis for subsequent deliberations of the parent assembly. In short, parent assembly delegates certain elements of its deliberative task to other subgroups. Thus we talk about delegated deliberations. My proposal here is that this type of deliberation system used in Parliaments to be generalized to deliberation processes. This model of deliberation may take place in any kind of deliberation within large groups. The deliberative aim will be achieved by dividing up the deliberative task in such ways as it is done within a Parliament. The deliberative task will be divided and then assigned to some sub-units of the larger group. These subsets of the larger group will provide a background and some informational inputs into the deliberation of the larger group with the overall deliberative responsibility and the authority of decision-making. We have already some ideational subsets namely the political parties that can be regarded as ideational facts as well as organizational ones, and they can deliberate in the system described above. There is also an inquiry in what concerns representing diversity. Democratic ideals can nonetheless be furthered, even if not perfectly accomplished, by a politics of *partial presence*, chastening decision-makers by reminding them of the sheer fact of diversity among those for whom they are legislating.

Deliberative Democracy's Scale Problem

Deliberative democracy's scale problem refers to decisions made after deliberation which appear to be illegitimate for those outside the deliberation forum, while introducing more people in forum would quickly turn into a place of speech pronunciation and not one for deliberation. Moreover, the legitimacy problem has to do with motivations. In order to have a genuine deliberation, those participants who are enrolled in the forum should meet the above minimum procedural requirements, including availability and reciprocity requirements, leaving aside strategic concerns. Even so, people's predetermined goals, interests and preferences are an essential part of what motivates them to get into political arenas from the beginning.

Dryzek (2001) comes with three solutions to the scale problem: restricting the number of opportunities for deliberation on major constitutional moments or when the stakes of deliberations impact the basic structure of society; restricting the number of people who discuss them and ensure that they are representative of those who do not; partial substitution of internal, individual deliberation with interactive social deliberation, that makes others to be present in one's own thoughts and words. As Dryzek argues, the first solution is not really a solution, since restricting the opportunities for genuine deliberation in society just narrows the number of occasions when the scale problem appears. It does not solve the problem, it just ignores it. Second, the representation solution raises the question of the criteria on which we choose our representatives and their legitimacy, so the scale problem is moved in a new direction. The third option may be attractive at some deliberative times, but is problematic if some groups of people are more "spoken for" than "speakers", as it often was in the case of women, ethnic minorities and other groups at risk of exclusion.

To provide a solution to the deliberative democracy's scale problem, Dryzek appeals particularly to the idea of discursive democracy (rather than deliberative). Following the ideas of Benhabib (1996), Dryzek argues that to the extent that public reasoning is performed by qualified and reasoned actors it exceeds time and space. However, the control of speeches of that sort can be achieved through decentralized networks with multiple actors, egalitarian structured, typical for new social movements. The same idea which overcomes the problem of deliberative democracy's scale problem is found by Habermas (1996) who speaks of *two-track deliberation model* to some extent equivalent to Mansbridge's deliberative system.

For Dryzek, the legitimacy occurs at the interference of the public sphere with the state and not within individual deliberations on a smaller scale. But Parkinson (2003) is not convinced that legitimacy can be removed so easily at individual level. First, the speeches are not detached from the people, they are partly constitutive to identities and are tools by which people reach their goals. Secondly, the victory of a speech rationality does not depend on the speech, but depends more on the existing power structure in which discourses are embedded. Third, the views articulated in the public sphere are dependent on the number of people who subscribe, who owe allegiance or become co-authors of contesting discourses. So legitimacy is created at the intersection of the public sphere and state, thus deliberative democracy is more than a series of small and closed deliberative moments. This leads us to examine the representation solution and the rules which can legitimize it.

The Legitimacy of Representation

Representation can offer us a solution for deliberative democracy's scale problem in what concerns legitimacy, as it provides a way for people who are not physically included in a given deliberative forum, to have the impression at the same time that they have some influence. In other words, we should try to find the rules that make exclusion legitimate, rather than making legitimacy depend on full inclusion, which is impossible. We must think of this in terms of people's perceptions, which seem to be a prerequisite to free us from the deliberative democracy ideal as seen by Benhabib and Cohen.

There are many reasons why we choose representation, some of them expressed by various authors and related to elitist theorists' assumptions about the deliberative capabilities of ordinary people. In this paper, to argue the legitimacy of representation, I take an institutionalist perspective which argues that it is not that ordinary people could not deliberate, but liberal democratic structures do not give them the chance to develop these deliberative capabilities. Therefore, people may prefer legitimate representation for the following reasons as Parkinson (2003) notes: 1) the representation can be effective in terms of non-participants because some people do not want to deliberate with respect to a given problem, but still have an interest in the results; 2) one's own perception rather than that of elite theories may lead to the idea that personal viewpoints can be better advanced by someone more competent in communication than it would do it alone; 3) the representation itself eliminates the unessential and focuses on specific items.

The next obvious question is: what should be represented? The answer would be the affected people, the legitimacy derives ultimately from society as it is structured. But those affected can not be determined with certainty, they are not unified defined by contextualized, socially-constructed multiple roles and identities as I mentioned above. What should be stressed here is that group memberships are relevant when dealing with affected groups (such as black or women), but it is up to individuals to decide what affiliations to emphasize in certain contexts and thus to determine for themselves who are those affected at any deliberative time. Thus representation becomes a problem when people have to choose other people to represent them and here we are faced with two questions: how representatives are elected? and what is their role? Scholars identify the representation based on a *delegated model* and the representation based on trust, the so-called the *trustee model*. The first model corresponds to an accountability view, the other is based on an authorization model. Arguments about which model is justified are spanning through centuries, but there can not be an answer in general terms, the type of representation depending on the functions expected from representatives at a certain moment of decision.

Hence, the legitimacy of deliberative democracy's forums is still questioned. In my opinion, the trustee model of representation is more acceptable due to the deliberation condition which predicates that all participants will be open to persuasion and influence. Actually by arguing in favor of the trustee model we confirm one of the the major advantages of deliberation, namely the idea that preferences can be changed after a confrontation. Thus, it may be that any decision taken by the deliberative assembly does not resemble with the ideas introduced in the forum or they can be influenced by an idea held by a minority group, and the new decision not to be representative at the beginning in any way for the the majority of non-participants. This problem was highlighted by Fishkin (1997). How can non-participants to be present at the deliberations of those invested with confidence if the genuine deliberation was excluded? There is no total trust and total delegation therefore legitimate representatives behave both as delegates and as depositories of trust, having responsibility and authorization from their principal. Thus, the best arguments and motivations that convince the representatives within the deliberative sphere must also convince the represented people. It follows that legitimacy can be reached through various deliberative forums, not just within individual deliberative instants. Once the people have been exposed to those arguments by their representatives in their separate deliberations, they also should be persuaded.

The third major question concerns how the representatives are elected. People elect their representatives either directly, or they are selected by the organizers of deliberative forums based on external selection criteria. The question regarding the selection methods is related to the controversy whether different relevant groups should be represented equally or proportionately. Sometimes a legitimate deliberation in a decision-making group should use an equal representation of relevant differences (ex. the same number of men and women, regardless of their actual number in the total population). Parkinson (2004) has recommended the *statistical representation* where the purpose is to gather information and *equal representation* of parties when deliberation has as a result a decision. We note that the problem of selecting the representatives from a statistically point of view is often discussed but the issue of liability (accountability) and the authorization of representatives according to some external criteria is rarely raised.

To go ahead with suggesting wider implications, we need to synthesize the arguments already stated. So far, we tried to identify the rules that make exclusion from the deliberative forums to be legitimate to avoid what is impossible – the total inclusion in deliberations. Representation is context-specific. The memberships that individuals consider relevant, the representative roles vis-a-vis their mandants, the selection process and the issue of proportionality, it all depends on the subject matter and the purpose of the representative body. Legitimacy depends ultimately not on technocrats assessment, but on the people themselves who decide what is relevant and what is not. The deliberative democracy should be open in the sense that those potentially concerned should have the chance to judge the importance (*publicity condition of deliberative democracy*) and the opportunity to influence the rules of inclusion and exclusion. Another argument is that the deliberative representation in order to be legitimate must have only the power of recommendation and not decisive power, and deliberative bodies should be proportional only if the purpose is to gather information and not when the aim is to decide.

Thus we get to the idea that deliberative representation requires representatives to act in a dual role. They should be free to be convinced of better arguments, thus behaving as depositories of confidence (trustees), but they still need to communicate with their principals as delegates, meeting the requirements of accountability and authorization. Any contradiction is overcome if one looks at deliberative moments as incorporated into a broader deliberative system (Mansbridge's perspective).

What Counts as Good Discourse and Deliberation?

Even if I agree with the *deliberative system* concept proposed by Mansbridge (2004) and her critics toward the rigorous and useless deliberative standards applied in places where there is no need for them, we still have to address the issue of what counts as good discourse and deliberation. In the following lines I will present a scheme that synthesizes the criteria proposed by three distinct sets of scholars: Oxford-Berkeley philosopher of language Paul Grice, a team of international relations specialists led by Knud Midgaard, and the team of comparative politics experts led by Jürg Steiner. All this scholars were preoccupied to identify some rules for what counts as a good discourse and deliberation.

Table 1. Standards for good discursive practice

Rules of political interlocution	Maxims of conversation	Indices of deliberative quality
Sense	Quantity (contribution as informative as is required)	Open participation
Sincerity	Quality (avoid lack of evidence and false statements)	Justification and validity of claims
Relevance	Relevance	Consideration of the common good
Attentiveness	Manner (avoid obscurity and ambiguity)	Respect
Respect		Rationally motivated consensus
		Authenticity
(Midgaard et al, 2008)	(Grice, 1989)	(Steiner et al, 2004)

The question is whether and how these rules might properly be used to study and to improve genuinely political conversational interactions. We cannot realistically expect all the deliberation virtues (see Table 1) to be constantly on display at every step of the decision process in a deliberative democracy. It is realistic to expect that different deliberative virtues might be on display at

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different steps of the process. All three perspectives argue that discourse – no matter if it is a conversation, a political interlocution, or a deliberation, it is basically about a cooperative game. But communication in the real world is not the purely cooperative game of the philosophical imagination. Instead communication and implicit the deliberation processes are a mixed-motive game of strategy, a game of pure competition, in which one person's gains are the other's losses.

Reconfiguration of Politics, Deliberative Democracy and Digital Citizenship

Because of the growing electoral absenteeism, the contemporaneous society requires a reconfiguration of the participatory democracy paradigm. Thus we may talk about a deliberative democracy project that progressively prevailed in the '90s, and which was aware of the participation's constraints, ending to suggesting a more "qualitative" approach of democracy theories (this development was called *deliberative turn*). This is the general meaning of the political reconfiguration we focus on in this study, and the broadcasted political debates are the deliberative tools, the means by which citizens are able to remain permanently connected to the social and political reality, being civically involved and able to put continuous pressure on their political representatives. Participating to political debates represents another form of democratic activity at least as of the same effectiveness as voting. These debates are a way of establishing authority and legitimacy which is a source and an end for the community itself (Barbaros, 2014).

I recall Seyla Benhabib's argumentation in favor of network-based model of accountability, a model supported also by Manuel Castells and his "network society" (Castells, 2005) that says "it is through the interlocking net of these multiple forms of associations, networks, and organizations that an anonymous public conversation results" (Benhabib, 1996, 73) and by consequence this public conversation will be crystallized in public opinion and public demands and accountability toward the representatives. At this point, I admit the benefits that a community or even the society on the whole might enjoy from Internet use. Many authors speak about *digital citizenship* a concept that might be defined as the ability to participate in society online. The *digital citizens* will be those who "use the Internet regularly and effectively – that is, on a daily basis; they use technology frequently for political information to fulfill their civic duty and use technology at work for economic gain" (Mossberger et

al. 2008). In the following lines I will try to identify the benefits and opportunities provided by the Internet for a more active citizenship, and whether individuals with the help of Internet have the capacity to participate fully in society and to make the ideal of deliberative democracy become true. It is obvious that Internet offers us an almost unlimited access to alternative information, many ways to communicate, to interact, to debate and to aggregate opinions. In the same time, digital citizenship requires educational capacities as well as access to technology and skills. The well-known problems such as poverty, illiteracy, and unequal educational opportunities prevent more people from full online participation and in society more generally. We speak about the technology inequality that disables some people from being part of the online society and to some public deliberations that might affect or interest them.

It is largely recognized that education has promoted economic growth and democracy, the question is if the Internet has the potential to offer the same opportunities of progress for society as a whole, and to promote the participation of individuals within society's affairs. Does digital citizenship encourage social inclusion, political participation and deliberation? This paper cannot answer to this question. My purpose here is just to point out the opportunity provided by Internet and the digital citizenship for political participation and deliberative democracy. It is obvious that in information age digital citizenship has the potential to encourage the political and economic engagement in society. As DiMaggio argues "the Internet is a unique technology in its varied properties and wide range of uses. It is a telephone, library and soapbox; it is a storehouse of information and channel for communication (DiMaggio et al. 2001, 321). These diverse characteristics facilitate new forms of involvement that could change the existing social relations. We are talking about a far-reaching technology that definitely has policy implications and will also have spillover effects for society as scholars have already demonstrated (Mossberger et al. 2008). If modern technologies of communication offer new tools for contacting officials and keep them accountable, discussing issues, and mobilizing citizens, then the network externalities exceed the expectations and facilitate the real-world deliberative democracy.

Nowadays most of the governments, community organizations, interest groups, political campaigns are hosting web sites that offer political information. Actually, we are witnessing a growth of e-government and the explosion of political information on the Web. But despite this we still have disparities in what concerns the frequency of use and digital skills required by Internet together with the fact that the motivation to go online and physical

access to the Internet becomes more widespread (Van Dijk 2005, 73). Even though, we have to keep in mind Putnam's idea that "political knowledge and interest in public affairs are critical preconditions for more active forms of involvement" (Putnam 2000, 35), consequently the Internet at least provides us with a lot of information.

The literature concerned with the impact of the Internet focuses its research endeavor to answer to what extent does the Internet provide a greater access to political knowledge, facilitating democratic participation and deliberation. Does the Internet increase political interest and discussion? Which are the possible benefits of digital citizenship for inclusion and the polity? The answers to these questions will influence for sure the deliberative turn and the research concerned with the possibility conditions of deliberative democracy. Anyway, until now scholars tend to agree that civic engagement is a complex concept consisting of political interest, political discussion and political knowledge. We hypothesize that consuming political information online helps citizens obtain higher levels of political knowledge, become more interested in politics, and deliberate with their fellow citizens about politics more frequently. If the consumption of online political information encourages interest, raises political sophistication, and fuels discussion, it may somehow offset a long-lasting trend of declining participation. While the reasons for this decline in civic engagement and participation are multifaceted, and not without difficulty resolved by any single key, the Internet may be an instrument for improving citizenship in the information age, especially in the case of civic engagement among younger.

Consistent with the previous ideas, Norris (2001) argues that numerous features of online interaction may nurture the civic engagement. Among these characteristics the author enumerates the Internet's interactivity, diversity, flexibility, speed, convenience, low cost, and information capacity potentially that allow the public to become more knowledgeable about politics and government – a first step toward greater participation (Norris, 2001). Interpersonal and small group debates are also likely to happen online, in contrast to the inactive consumption of news accessible through other media. Research has shown that online debates are more open and egalitarian than face-to-face meetings. Online communication has also been found to be more diverse with regard to physical features such as race, gender, and age (Rheingold, 2000).

The Internet is said to have more influence than other media on political knowledge. We cannot state that for certain, but intuitively we may advance this idea. Also, media-use in general enables political discussion, but as the Internet

provides interactive opportunities for participation, so it should lead to higher levels of political discussion. Political interest is possibly the most important dimension of civic engagement. A more varied and ideological, content available, online may stimulate greater political interest (Smith and Tolbert, 2004).

The influence of digital citizenship is most intense for young people. The young – the demographic segment with the lowest civic and political contribution – have the highest probability of looking for online political information and becoming active in online politics. Because the young are expected to have technology access and frequently use of online news (Lenhart 2003), the consequences for the constant engagement of future generations are significant.

To summarize, we have two perspectives in what concerns the effects of different forms of Internet communication. The first is inspired by the theory of deliberative democracy, which argues that the media do not have a direct relationship with political participation. Instead, media only offer topics that encourage social discourse, which is the mechanism that impacts political activities. This theory foresees that Internet should enable political participation through opportunities for individuals to meet and participate in discourse. The second approach in which Internet may stimulate participation is through the mobilization efforts of parties and varied interest groups. Briefly, we may argue that Internet promotes participation in three ways: by offering information, by providing channels that permit individuals to meet and discuss politics, and by offering interest groups, politicians, and parties a means for invigorating the mobilization endeavor.

As a concluding thought I state that deliberative democratic theory is experiencing another one of its ‘turns’ as Dryzek noticed (2010). After an early period of theoretical explanations came a long period of looking for institutional arrangements, followed now by the perspective of a “deliberative system” (Parkinson and Mansbridge). Empirical studies of deliberative democracy produced rich, qualitative descriptions and explanations, uncovering new practices, and inspiring the creation of new ones (Thompson 2008). But despite the steady interest in deliberation process, unexpectedly little is known about the quality of deliberative processes. While Dryzek (2010, 9) argues that theory and empirics have never been closer, the knowledge is not so systematic. It focuses on deliberation’s effects rather than its inner processes. Its normative assessments are still based on idealizations of actors, sites and processes, and it continues to reach to the conclusions in one political context and apply them to others without cautions or explanations. This chapter has tried to systematize what we do know about the quality and dynamics of deliberative processes.

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Second, it has tried to provide readers with some arguments in favor of deliberative democracy and some examples of deliberative democracy in action. Also, I have tried to present the empirical claims and questions that arise in the latest theorizing studies on deliberative democracy following the systemic turn. What this chapter has not done is to produce and test explanations concerning why sometimes the deliberation process' impact is achieved, and why sometimes it is not. In my opinion, what is most necessary is not so much more research on this question as more mini-publics – both in order to improve the social scientist' sample and, mostly, in order to improve the democratic practice's quality.

Debating together is for sure a good way of putting all the possibilities on the table and discovering their strong and weak points. It is a good approach for informing people to the perspectives of others. It is also a good way of making people aware of just how diverse a community is, that such community will be bound by the rules that they adopt. My argumentation is favoring the existence of deliberative procedures in the middle of the political process, but the final decisions must be assumed through aggregative procedures, such as voting.

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The Aesthetics of Existence and the Political in Late Foucault*

Daniel Nica

“Maybe our problem now is to discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history. Maybe the problem is to change those technologies. And in this case, one of the main political problems nowadays would be, in the strict sense of the word, the politics of ourselves.”

Michel Foucault

The last period of Foucault’s work is often labeled as “the ethical turn”. His reflections upon the Greek *epimeleia heautou* (“care of the self”), his Nietzschean ideal of making life “a work of art”, and his search for new forms of subjectivity are commonly seen as a shift from his former political “problematizations” in favor of an ethical approach, focused on the so-called “aesthetics of existence”. After his courses at Collège de France on bio-power and governmentality, and after the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, everyone was expecting Foucault to deepen his investigations on “power relations”. Instead of these, Foucault opened a new field of questions and problematizations regarding the emergence of the ethical subject. Both his previous analyses on power and his late reflections concerning the self-formation of the subject received a lot of criticisms¹. In what follows, I

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¹ There was a lot of criticisms against Foucault’s considerations on power, the most famous probably being the ones made by Habermas (1986, 1987) and Taylor (1986). The former accused Foucault of misinterpreting the legacy of Kant and the Enlightenment project and

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shall not refer to the objections against his former investigations, but only to the critique against his ethical turn.

In this paper, I would like to present the role played by the aesthetics of existence in the entire Foucauldian work and to answer some of the objections Foucault received on his late inquiries. Some of these objections concern the immoralism and relativism of Foucault's ethics; others try to prove that the abandonment of power analysis lead Foucault towards an individualistic ethics, lacking political engagement. All these criticisms have a common element, and this is the charge of dandyism and narcissism that allegedly underlie Foucault's ethical turn. The allegation of dandyism was initially expressed by Peter Dews in 1989 (Lightbody 2008); this was made famous and largely articulated in Pierre Hadot's "Reflections on the Notion of the 'Cultivation of the Self'". Hadot accused Foucault of anachronism and of deploying a purely aesthetic notion of self-creation, which risks creating a contemporary form of narcissism.

By concentrating his interpretation to such a great extent exclusively on the interpretation of the cultivation of the self, on the concern for the self and on conversion towards the self and in a general way, by defining his ethical model as an ethics of existence, Foucault might have been advancing a cultivation of the self which was too purely aesthetic – that is to say, I fear, a new form of dandyism, a late twentieth century version. (Hadot 1991, 230)

Hadot claimed that Foucault's reading of the Greek "care of the self" is anachronistic and it bears the marks of Romanticism and postmodernism. But postmodern thinkers criticized Foucault as well. In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Rorty accused Foucault of being insensitive to forming a new "we", that is a new set of political arrangements centered on the ideal of solidarity. Rorty claimed that, although Foucault's ethics could be useful for the private projects of self-creation, it remains politically problematic due to its lack of concern about the public sphere (1989, 64-66). The same charge of individualism was later made by Th. McCarthy (1994), but for different reasons.

thus departing from the modern paradigm of rationality. The latter held that, in the absence of a robust account on what is legitimate power, his reflections on power are inefficient or even incoherent. There is an enormous amount of papers which tried to answer these objections.

McCarthy argued that Foucault's individualism resides in his misunderstanding of what normative ethics really is:

Foucault's representation of universal morality, geared as it is to substantive codes, misses the point of formal, procedural models, namely to establish a general framework of justice within which individuals and groups may pursue different conceptions of the good or beautiful life. (...) Foucault's aesthetic individualism is no more adequate to this social dimension of autonomy than was the possessive individualism of early modern political theory. (McCarthy 1994, 270-271)

McCarthy's criticism opens up to the other line of objections to the ethical turn of Foucault. This sort of objections is best expressed by Richard Wollin's remarks according to which "aesthetics decisionism" leads to a certain immoralism that entails a "politics of nihilistic catastrophe" (Wollin 1988, 85). At the heart of these kind of attacks lays the traditional desire for an objective decision making procedure, which could be embodied in policies and institutional resolutions.

There are several authors and Foucauldian scholars who answered these kinds of criticisms in brief remarks and in more or less expeditious commentaries. In this paper, I intend to give a more detailed reply to the allegation of narcissism. I will do so by elucidating certain key themes of the aesthetics of existence and by stressing the political implications of Foucault's ethical project.

Preliminaries to the Aesthetics of Existence. Early Problematizations of the Subject

It should be said from the outset that the problematization of subject(ivity) is not only a late enterprise of Foucault, but a constant preoccupation that informs his entire work. As C. G. Prado notes, "basic to his work is the idea that subjectivity is a complex product rather than a preexisting condition" (Prado 2000, 10). This idea echoes Nietzsche's claim according to which the classical representation of the subject is a fiction, among others fictions that deluded Western metaphysics. The Platonic soul trapped in the body, the Cartesian *cogito*, and the transcendental subject of Kant are – in Nietzsche's view – pure mystifications, derived from the false belief in

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“eternity” and “objectivity”. The common assumption of these concepts is that the self has a substantial existence, which resides in some essential properties like rationality, immutability and the capacity for autonomous action. All of these endorse the idea that there is an ontological substrate of the self that gives the individual a definitive identity and a strong essence:

But there is no such substrate; there is no “being” behind the doing, acting, becoming. “The doer” is merely made up and added into the action – the act is everything. (*GMI*, 13)

If the subject is not given, then it is created. For Nietzsche, the problem of self-creation is not just an aphoristic wrinkle, but – as Alexander Nehamas (1985) pointed out – the idea that permeates his entire philosophy. For Foucault, the self-constitution of the subject represented indeed only a late interest. Nevertheless, the field of questions regarding subjectivity had already been a major concern for Foucault ever since the 60s. For instance, in *The Order of Things*, Foucault posed the question regarding man’s existence, imagining a world without man, i.e. without our actual conception of “the man”:

Does man really exist? To imagine, for an instant, what the world and thought and truth might be if man did not exist, is considered to be merely indulging in paradox. This is because we are so blinded by the recent manifestation of man that we can no longer remember a time – and this is not so long ago – when the world, its order, and human beings existed, but man did not. (Foucault 1970, 322)

This question about the existence of man was reconfigured and answered in more than one way in Foucault’s work afterwards. Short after *The Order of Things*, Foucault posed again the same interrogation, but the figure of man was restricted to the subject of writing. Thus, in 1969, the figure of “author” was brought into question. Echoing Roland Barthes’ reflections about authorship, Foucault was asking if not necessarily the general man, but a specific figure of the man, namely the author, really exists. Claiming that our contemporary notion of the author is a recent product of history, Foucault claimed that the author does not precede the work; he is rather a function than an autonomous substance (Foucault 1984a, 113). After a year, in his inaugural lecture at Collège de France, Foucault said he wanted to be a “nameless voice, long preceding” him, leaving him “merely to enmesh” himself in language

(Foucault 1972, 215). The thing at stake was the possibility of conceiving the “I” not as a transcendental subject, but as an effect. But, going further from his previous position, Foucault extended his inquiries beyond the analysis of language. The subject was now observed through the lens of new elements such as forces, power relations and social practices. And the archaeological research was mixed with the genealogical approach, which exposed the contingent and less noble emergences of our actual comportment. In *Discipline and Punish*, this method was used to reveal how hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination produced the modern disciplined subject. And, as M. Huijer notes, Foucauldian genealogy seemed to describe the individual as a “marionette”:

With his archaeological and genealogical analysis, Foucault boarded up the space of disappeared man by means of a complex ensemble of power and knowledge (...). “Man” (in so far as such a being could still exist) was perceived as a marionette, a subservient and silent body that was observed, disciplined and normalized down to the very last detail. (Huijer 1999, 64)

It was clear by now that the subject was an effect of power. The final attack on the classical figure of the subject was given in Foucault’s lectures at Collège de France and, most notably, in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. The relationship a subject has with power is not of possession, but of embodiment, because power is neither local, nor subjective. It is a complex strategic situation, a pervasive interplay of forces, intentions and (re)actions. Power “comes from everywhere” and it is not “an institution, not a structure, neither it is a strength we are endowed with” (Foucault 1998, 63). Instead of depicting the repressive aspects of power, Foucault emphasized its productive function. What does power produce? To put it briefly, it produces reality. And, as a part of the reality, the subject is also a product of power:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes”, it “represses”, it “censors”, it “abstracts”, it “masks”, it “conceals”. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault 1991, 194)

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Discipline and Punish and *The Will to Knowledge* were the last books Foucault published before the so-called “ethical turn”. These works depict a fragile subject, which seems dramatically “powerless” in the face of power. Similar to the “man” of human sciences, the “individual” of the control society is not the bright and strong figure imagined by humanism. However, a thing should be clear by now. From the early idea of the construction of man by modern discourse, to the later idea of the production of the individual by universal power, the problematization of the subject was Foucault’s constant interest.

The Aesthetics of Existence – A Reconstruction and Other Clarifications

With the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault tackles the chances of the subject to withstand power. In the pervasive interplay of power relations, there are multiple resistances², which tend to modify the power relations. This idea was already suggested in *The Will to Knowledge*:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. (Foucault 1979, 95)

It is true that resistance can never escape power, but nevertheless it can alter power, by changing its direction. Unlike the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, the second one explores the possibility of conceiving resistance as a form of freedom³. It is not a Kantian freedom, which would allow the subject to exercise power, but a sort of “freeness as opposed to power” (Huijer 1999, 66).

² The theme of resistance comes to be necessary when Foucault talks of power in terms of actions and reactions. If Foucault hadn’t mention the issue of resistance, then the power relations would have been understood as pure domination, not as forces. But, in Foucault’s view, power is rather about force than about domination. I think this is an important nuance, which should not be left out.

³ In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault does not approach frontally the theme of resistance, but the shift from his previous analyses is pretty clear. The stake of investigating *aphrodisia* is to illustrate how human beings can acquire a state of freedom (though they are enmeshed in power relations – as the previous writings have shown).

In order to explore this new possibility, Foucault turns back to Antiquity⁴ and changes his focus from politics to ethics. But, for Foucault, ethics does not refer to a theory of moral rules, but to a relationship one has with himself/herself. Besides various codes of conduct and the conformity with these codes, morality means the relation of a subject to itself (Foucault 1985, 29). And precisely in this ethical field, is self-creation possible. One can become an ethical subject not merely by complying with actual rules, but also by inventing new forms of self-discipline and by stylizing his existence.

In opposition to his previous analyses regarding the “death of man”, Foucault claims that the subject is an open space, which is constantly filled up not only through biopolitical normalization, but through self-creation as well. In this sense, the French thinker states that

(...) in the course of their history men had never ceased constructing themselves, that is to shift continuously the level of their subjectivity, to constitute themselves in an infinite and multiple series of different subjectivities that would never reach an end and would never place us in the presence of something that would be “man”. (Foucault 1991, 123-124)

One cannot speak of “Man” as a unique and strong figure, but further more one cannot speak of man as a marionette. In the historical game of power relations, the subject was invented in various modes, and it invented itself in numerous fashions. While the investigation of modernity showed how power manufactured a certain kind of subjectivity, the return to Antiquity proved that the possibility of self-constitution lies at the very heart of power relations. Power is not something that comes upon one like an ineluctable force, but something in which one can obtain a certain degree of control over himself/herself:

I do indeed believe that there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere. I am very skeptical of this view of the subject and very hostile to it. I

⁴ Foucault published *The Use of Pleasure* in 1984 together with the third volume of *HS*, but the return to Antiquity had begun in 1980, with Foucault’s course *The Government of the Living*. Detailed analyses on the Ancient self-techniques came in 1982-1983 with his series of lectures published in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2005).

believe, on the contrary, that the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty, as in Antiquity, on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment. (Foucault 1988b, 50-51)

Foucault learned from Greek Antiquity⁵ to see ethics more as a personal activity than as an impartial debate over rules. Back then, people were not concerned about determining a unique and objective code of conduct; instead, what they were looking for was to “constitute a kind of ethics which was an aesthetics of existence” (Foucault 1984b, 343). The Roman aristocrats found themselves in the same situation, developing their own path of stylizing life. In the second and the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault investigated how the Greeks and Romans respectively dealt with a particular domain of their life, namely sexuality. Sex is, for Foucault, just a pretext of illustrating how different subjects and cultures can attain a state of freedom and harmony through different, but coherent forms of self-discipline. And if history proves that different practices are equally effective in their own respect, then morality is something much more complex than the “universal/relative” dichotomy seems to show. Thus, ethics becomes aesthetics of existence.

Shifting from ethics as moral codes to ethics as aesthetics of existence, Foucault opened up a wide space of new and interesting experiences through which the self becomes an ethical subject. To illustrate the richness of ethics, the French thinker proposed four elements constitutive for the relation of the self to itself. (These elements appear not only in an aesthetics of existence, but may be present in a codified morality as well.)

The first aspect of the relation with the self is *the determination of the ethical substance* (Foucault 1985, 26-27) and it represents a formal or an “ontological” element. The question at stake is: what part of the subject requires ethical concern? For ancient Greeks, the ethical substance was “the use of pleasures” (*aphrodisia*), noticing their danger and looking for moderation. For

⁵ It is important to note that, for Foucault, the Antiquity is not the right and unique answer to our questions. (Foucault 1984, 343). He does not regard Greek ethics as a moral solution for today’s problems, since the Greeks had many social problems like the subjection of women, slavery and other inequalities. But nevertheless, Foucault thinks the way people conceived ethics in those times could give us relevant suggestions for creating an aesthetics of existence, suitable for the present.

Christians, the ethical substance was the desires of the flesh, and in this way emerged the possibility of committing sins in ones heart (Mt. 5:28). For Kant, the supremacy of “the good will” engages the intentions as the ethical substance.

The second aspect of ethics is *the mode of subjectification*⁶ (1985, 27) and this is the material or the “deontological” element. The important question here is: how does a subject relate to a set of prescriptions and to the part of him/her that is determined as ethical substance? The mode of subjectification refers to the manner in which an individual accepts to comply with a rule, and he is justified to think his acts are morally valuable. For Greeks, the mode of subjection was the decision of a free man to live a noble life according to the exigencies of self-mastership. That is why, for them, the ethics was stricter than the moral code. While the moral code had few prescriptions, the ethical life of a Greek had much more self-regulations. For a Christian, the mode of subjection is obeying God’s commandments in an effort to follow the sinless demeanor of Jesus Christ. For Kant, subjection to a rule entails the distinction between actions in accordance with duty, and actions from duty. That is why only the latter are morally right.

The third component of the relation with the self is *the ethical work* (1985, 27) and this is an ascetic⁷ or efficient element. The main interrogations are: what are the means by which the individual can become morally praiseworthy? How do you train yourself in order to accomplish your ethical goals? These questions aim at establishing certain techniques and practices of the self through which a person can become the ethical subject he wants to be. These self-techniques

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and

⁶ The French word is “assujettissement”. Some translate it as “subjection”, others translate it as “subjectivation”. In English, it sounds better “subjection”, but the problem with this translation lies in the connotation of “submission” the word “subjection” has. The Foucauldian “assujettissement” bears a significant ambivalence. It is not only subjection; it may be self-creation too. The other translation, “subjectivation”, does not have the same problem, but it conceals the difference between two related, yet distinct Foucauldian concepts: “subjectivation” as the translation of the French “subjectivation”, and “subjectification” as the translation of “assujettissement”. The former has only a passive connotation, whilst the latter has an active one too.

⁷ The ethical work is “ascetic” in the old, Greek sense. Not that it leads to asceticism, but that it is an *askēsis*, which is an effort of doing something or, to put it simple, a practice.

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souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault 1988a, 18)

In other writings, Foucault analyzed most of the self-techniques present in Greek and Roman culture: the dialogue, the examination of conscience, meditation, the notebooks (*hypomnemata*) etc. Some of these techniques were taken up by the Christians, who changed them according to their goals. For example, the examination of conscience was practiced in the Christian culture as self-decipherment, a tool for detecting the “evil” that is dwelling in oneself.

The fourth element of ethics is the *teleology of the moral subject* (1985, 27-28). An action is not praiseworthy in itself, but only as a part of a greater whole, which is the ethical conduct; that is why every ethics has an end or a *telos*. Each act aims at establishing a certain way of life. Like the other elements, the teleology of the moral subject suffered significant changes over the time. For the old Greeks, the stake of the ethical work was to acquire complete governance over the self. For the Romans, the purpose was to attain a total detachment from the daily needs and pleasures. In Christian religion, the end of moral life was immortality, living together with God in the Kingdom of Heavens. We may easily see that, of all these ends, the Christian one is the most promising. And Foucault suggestion – even if not expressed as such – was that in the name of the most generous ideal, Western conduct became stricter and stricter, leading to the “juridification of morality”. This process did not stop in the twilight of the Middle Ages, but continued during modern period. However, the equivalence between morality and obedience reached a critical point in the present days. In such a context, the search for an aesthetic of existence becomes an urgent task:

From Antiquity to Christianity, we pass from a morality that was essentially the search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules. And if I was interested in Antiquity it was because, for a whole series of reasons, the idea of morality as obedience to a code of rules is now disappearing, has already disappeared. And to this absence of morality corresponds, must correspond, the search for an aesthetics of existence. (Foucault 1988b, 49)

But why is this kind of ethics labeled as “aesthetics”? This is a question that has not been answered yet. What is aesthetical in self-creation? To respond to this question, we should turn back to Nietzsche’s *Will to Power*. For the German philosopher, the world is “a work of art that gives birth to itself” (WP §796) and the man should live his life as “a work of art without an author”. The subject is not something given, but an invention, a stake (WP §481). If the subject, and consequently the author, is not a substantial agent, then the author does not precede the work (Foucault 1984a, 113). The self emerges in the act, and the author emerges in the act of creation; the self is the very act itself. The subject is nothing but the process of subjectification. And the relationship I have with myself is nothing else but me. To put it simply, by creating something, I create myself without being the cause of myself. Does this mean that, for Foucault, the aesthetics of existence resumes only to artists and their creation?

The answer is “yes” and “no”. No, because the production of art objects is not what interests Foucault. The aesthetics of existence is not reserved for the artistic elite. But the answer is also “yes”, because not only objects, but subjects as well could be regarded as a work of art. In a famous interview, Foucault expressed his dissatisfaction with our narrow understanding of art creation:

What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life? (Foucault 1984b, 350)

Man’s self-constitution is also art creation in so far as the subject brings his life under certain criteria of harmony and perfection. For most of the commentators, Foucault’s idea seems to be that existence could be shaped to such an extent it becomes as beautiful as art. Another interpretation is advanced by Timothy O’Leary (2002, 131), who argues that “for Foucault ethics could be aesthetic by virtue of its technical, ascetic *modes*, rather than by virtue of any striving after unity, harmony, or purity per se”. O’Leary claims that Foucault uses the term “aesthetics”, simply because it involves, as most of artistic practices do, the act of giving a form. For him, the thing at stake is not the final beauty, but the bare process of shaping a personal style. Nevertheless, Foucault often talks about “purity”, “harmony” or “perfection”, when referring to the

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aesthetics of existence. One of these fragments was already quoted here (Foucault 1988a, 18). So what is self-creation really about: beauty or shaping?

I am inclined to think that O’Leary is right. The aesthetics of existence is more about the act of giving a form than to the beauty of the form. It is true that the subject is not a ground to start from, but a task to be done. However, this task is not an objective to be finally met, but a process to be permanently carried on. The self is a work in progress, which is never completed. So, on that basis, I think it is better to speak about constant shaping than about final beauty. One reason is that, in those contexts when he is talking about perfection or harmony, Foucault refers to Antiquity. And it was clear that, for the Greeks, the act of self-formation aimed at attaining a certain state of beauty, since the beauty and the good were the same thing (see the Greek concept *Kalokagathia*). Foucault knew that very well, so he could not employ an anachronistic model, based on such strong metaphysical assumptions. Not to say that Foucault was not a real fan of the Greek model and he did not think Antiquity was a Golden Age (Foucault 1984b, 347). Instead, he thought that the most valuable lesson of the ancients was precisely the importance of an *askēsis* practiced by the self on itself. And Foucault’s lesson for us is that we should find new forms of subjectivity that could answer contemporary challenges, not to return effectively to the old ones.

Secondly, I think O’Leary has a point, because the aesthetics of existence is not a “late 20th century version of dandyism”, as P. Hadot claimed. Self-Creation must be seen as a way of resistance against normalization, not as a form of self-contemplation. I will try to defend this thesis in the following section.

Answering the Criticisms

As I have already mentioned in the beginning, the main objection against Foucault’s ethical project is that it lacks social commitment, and it endorses narcissism. My strategy to answer this accusation is to highlight the public engagement of his aesthetics of existence, by showing how it infuses a politics of minimizing domination.

In these criticisms against the ethics of Foucault, I see two patterns of reproaches. One rebuke would be that, in his entire work, Foucault never attempted to develop a “serious” political project. After making a career of political deconstruction, marked by unmasking the risks without noticing the

benefits of historical progress, Foucault passed to a philosophy of subjectivity, which continued to avoid a normative account on public life. For this kind of critics, “the final Foucault” deploys a political-free investigation, which additionally misinterprets the ancient spirituality as a bourgeois self-complacency. The other pattern of reproach purports that, in moving to ethics, Foucault neglected some important issues of practical philosophy, like: the problem of moral values, of moral justification, of intersubjectivity etc. In modern philosophy, all these elements are deemed to be highly important for the edification of the moral world. Lacking these crucial discussions, Foucauldian ethics necessarily leads to individualism and immoralism. In what follows, I will bring into question the first pattern of criticism, by emphasizing the political significations of an aesthetics of existence.

It is necessary to say that this task is not just an eccentric interpretation of Foucault’s late work. The French thinker himself admitted that the aesthetics of existence has a political horizon, though he did not exploit it in detail. In one of his interviews, Foucault was asked if the problematic of self-creation could be “at the heart of a new way of thinking about politics, of a form of politics different from what we know today”. Foucault replied:

I admit that I have not got very far in this direction, and I would very much like to come back to more contemporary questions to try to see what can be made of all this in the context of the current political problematic. (Foucault 1987, 124)

Although the political implications of the aesthetics of existence remained unexploited, the urge of rethinking the political was present in late Foucault. But how to develop a new approach to politics starting from the self? And how is self-creation politically significant?

First of all, I think it is important to stress the twofold emergence of the subject in history. In such conditions, we should keep in mind that Foucault did not simply abandon the power relations analyses, but he *completed* them with his later insights on self-constitution. (Or, I should rather say that, in his final years, Foucault made them *explicit*, since some suggestions were already present in his previous work). Foucault was neither a mere pessimist who saw power relations as a total enslavement, nor a naive optimist who understood self-creation as a triumphant freedom. As a matter of fact, Foucault regarded himself as a “hyperactive pessimist” (Foucault 1984b, 347). We may say that he

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was at the same time a pessimist and an optimist. This ambivalence is linked to the dual constitution of man, who is both constructed and self-created. As Frédéric Gros puts it,

The individual subject only emerges at the intersection of a technique of domination and techniques of the self. It is the fold of processes of subjectivation over procedures of subjection, according to more or less overlapping linings subject to history. (Gros 2005a, 526)

Foucault does not see power as a negative and destructive reality, which aims at crushing individuals. In a manner similar to Nietzsche, Foucault interprets power as a multitude of energies, drives, actions and reactions, that is not oriented towards a single end. In this interplay of forces, there is a great deal of opposition. As I have already mentioned, Foucault (1979, 95) claims that “where there is power, there is resistance”. Taking further some Foucauldian remarks, M. Huijer notices that “without resistance, power relations would have the connotation not of force, but of domination” (Huijer 1999, 66). That is why, in the above quotation, Fr. Gros claims that the self appears at an intersection: not just as a product of pure domination, but also as a product of self-practice. And I propose that, in this context, we should understand self-practice in a loose sense, not in a narrow, technical one. It is not all about a specific and painful *askēsis*, but rather about a certain resistance that may occur at some points in everyone’s life.

To give a trivial example, if – in a formal wear situation – I refuse to dress in formal attire, I am not only making a gesture of defiance, but I also constitute myself to a certain extent. Or to provide an even more dramatic illustration, if – during a Nazi manifestation – one refuses to do the Hitler salute, one makes a protest, but he/she also creates oneself. (Of course, a true aesthetics of existence implies a long and severe asceticism, but that is not my point here). In everyday life, there are numerous examples of self-creation, some with a greater impact, and some with a lesser one. To refuse a general belief, to dress different, to act and speak in a personal and courageous way, to refuse an identity label imposed by society, to withstand fashionable trends etc – all of these are examples of self-constitution⁸ or self-creation. On the other

⁸ I think it is important to note that the word “self-constitution” has two meanings: a narrow one, which refers to the aesthetics of existence, and a broad one, which refers to any kind

hand, the opposite attitudes are examples of normalization. The thing at stake is where the balanced is inclined: to make personal choices or to passively embrace a selfhood.

For Foucault, self-creation is to a large extent a matter of transformation. The main task of the subject is “to refuse who he is” (Foucault 2010, 150) and to experience a radical conversion. This is why a good philosophy should not aim to discover the (possibility of) truth, but to develop

[...] an analysis that relates to what we are willing to accept in our world, to accept, to refuse, to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances. In sum, it is a question of searching for another kind of critical philosophy. Not a critical philosophy that seeks to determine the conditions and the limits of our possible knowledge of the object, but a critical philosophy that seeks the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves. (Foucault 1997, 179)

But why transformation is so important and how is it linked to the political? A brief answer would be that the practice of change is intimately connected to the act of resistance. The subject needs to transform itself in order to resist domination. The more an individual remains unchanged, the more he is vulnerable to control and normalization. One of the ways in which power operates similar to domination⁹ is the closure of the self in a fixed identity. And an individual needs to change himself/herself in order to maintain the self in the space of open possibilities. Furthermore, a relation of power that tends to enhance domination is reversed only by virtue of self-transformation. This sort

of subjectivation. For instance, if I chose to follow the standard prescriptions – it is also self-constitution. But, in this case, I do not really constitute myself, i.e. I do not constitute myself in a personal way, but I am constituted from outside. If, on the other hand, I chose to stylize my existence, then I can really talk about self-constitution or self-creation. In the fragment above, I use the word in this narrow sense, which refers to the aesthetics of existence.

⁹ I stress again that pure domination excludes power relations. In slavery, for instance, there is no power, but only constraints. And that is why we should not understand domination as a manifestation of power. Domination exists only when power disappears, i.e. when the structure of actions and reactions cease to exist. Domination is a kind of relation, which adjoins power, but is not included in it. The relationship between power and domination is that, in certain situations, power tends to get very close to domination.

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of neo-Nietzschean experimentalism seeks to displace standard subjectivities in order to change a larger framework of constraints. Moving from a single individual to a larger group, the problem of transformation is crucial, because it engages resistance as a political act. And Foucauldian resistance is informed by the urge to change a state of things characterized by social, political, cultural and economic hegemony.

Transforming yourself is a matter of transforming certain relations of power, which tend to neighbor domination. Given this, the political problem is to reconfigure and establish forms of social relations that decrease the effects of domination (O’Leary 2002, 158). In this respect, Foucault repeatedly gave the example of homosexual communities in which they have stylized their relations in order to resist normalization. If power operates at a micro-level, then the resistance against domination cannot be articulated as a macro-solution. People should not seek for a top-down disposal, which can cure “Society” as a whole. Instead, they can redefine and re-orient power relations by virtue of creating small communities with idiosyncratic habits and stylized interactions. Thus, stylization is configured as a transgression of imposed limits, a subversive way of facing domination and defying the *status quo*. People change themselves, but, in doing so, they change the established order.

If social relations are relations of power then the political stake of transformation is the minimization of control and oppression. And, for Foucault, the reduction of domination is the “the point of articulation of the ethical preoccupation and of the political struggle for the respect of rights, of the critical reflection against the abusive techniques of government” (Foucault 1987, 130). To put it simply, the aesthetics of existence as a political task is the maintenance of democracy. But if one speaks of “democracy”, one must be careful in using this word in reference to Foucault’s work. I am not entering here in the classical debates regarding the definition and classification of democracy. All I want to say is that, for Foucault, the essence of democracy does not lie in being a form of government based on social consent; but rather in being a system that provides the highest degree of freedom for its citizens (or, to be more accurate, the least possible domination).

In framing the aesthetics of existence within the four elements of an ethics, O’Leary claims Foucauldian ethics has freedom as its *telos* (2002, 159). But posing freedom as the final end of the ethical work seems to be problematic. One might assume that Foucault embraces the Enlightenment project, which strives for achieving an individual or collective liberty anchored in the “human

nature”. It would seem that Foucault is returning to Rousseau’s observation that “man is born free, but everywhere is in chains”. And it would seem that Foucault wants to recover the fundamental rights and liberties of “Man”, the noble and bright figure of humanist discourse. But – as I have already showed in the previous sections – this would be a misunderstanding.

For Foucault, freedom is neither an Existentialist “possibility of possibility”, nor a Hegelian final end. The French thinker rejects any conception of freedom as a transhistorical substance. Foucault is a philosopher of relations, and this is why his account of freedom is similar to his account of power. Freedom is relational and it is a historically determinate possibility which emerges only in the interplay of certain power relations. As O’Leary puts it, freedom is “not an ideal state for which we strive, it is a condition of our striving” (2002, 159). Not a transcendental condition from which we derive our autonomy, but a contingent situation of being capable to withstand certain forces. Freedom resides in my concrete and limited possibility to oppose an injunction, a demand, a constraining situation etc. To give some examples, freedom exists in the possibility to break the conduct code of my workplace, in the capacity to protest against the authorities, in the potential rejection of a label imposed on me, or in my capacity of saying “no” to an informal rule very appreciated in my circle of friends. Through all these rejections and violations, I am opposing a state of domination and thus I am taking some risks: of being sanctioned, blamed, marginalized etc. Given these risks, I cannot say that I am totally free, but however I have the capacity of govern myself in a different manner. Such alternative possibility is freedom as the condition of ethics.

If freedom is the condition of ethics, then how could at the same time freedom be its *telos*? Another question is: how could this stubbornness of mine have political significance? Is not it just a caprice, an evidence of selfishness? The answer to the first question is that freedom can be both a condition and a task, because the aim of the aesthetics of existence is to maintain a high degree of freedom. O’Leary claims that one criterion of evaluating an ethics is the extent to which “its deliberate form manages to preserve a maximum of freedom and a minimum of domination” (2002, 160). We can understand this in the following way. Every decision an individual makes puts him/her on a certain track, by closing up different possibilities. Making a decision means to open up a field of actions, but at the same time it means to close others. For example, if I choose to enroll the army, I will have the occasion to hold a gun in my hands, but I will close the possibility to criticize my superiors. On the other hand, if I

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chose to work at a university, I would close the possibility of having a gun, but I would have the opportunity of criticizing my superiors' ideas or even questioning their institutional decisions. Each of these contexts is permeated by power relations. But the question is: which of them preserve for me a maximum of freedom and a minimum of domination?

The same evaluation goes for social and political contexts. A law regarding the intensification of surveillance through CCTV cameras purportedly opens the possibility of living in a safer society, but closes to some extent the possibility of "privacy". On the other hand, rejecting such a law opens the possibility of higher intimacy, but closes the possibility of higher security. The question is again: which of these situations maintain a maximum of freedom and a minimum of domination in our society? The problem of freedom is the locus where ethics meets politics. And the resistance against domination does not take only the form of massive protests and collective struggles, but it also manifests as a relation subject has with itself. If one is a homosexual, one does not have to participate in a gay parade in order to resist domination. Instead, that person might refuse the label of "homosexual" as a defining identity, even if he/she has admitted to be gay. That person could think of himself/herself as an open project, not as a sexually defined individual. In fact, this is what Foucault did in his life. And his example shows us that one could still engage with a communal cause without letting him be absorbed by a given identity. Noticing the public engagement of the aesthetics of existence, McGushin states that

[f]or Foucault the aesthetics of existence always takes place in, and responds to a community, and defines itself in terms of its attachment to, or ruptures with, that community. (McGushin 2007, 301)

Like the ancient ethics, the aesthetics of existence is concerned not only with the personal venture of self-creation, but involves the others as partners and even purposes of the ethical work. Contrary to Habermas' accusation, the problem of subjectivity is traversed by the vein of intersubjectivity, since *epimeleia heautou* (the care of the self) entails *epimeleia ton allon* (the care for others). It is not that the aesthetics of existence would not be regarded as ethics in the absence of other individuals, but the others are always presupposed in the relationship one has with oneself. Foucault admits that "care for the self it is ethical in itself, but it implies complex relationships with others in the measure

where this *ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others” (1987, 118). In this respect, Fr. Gros claims that

[w]hat interests Foucault in the care of the self is the manner by which is integrated in the social fabric and constitutes a motor for political action. Care of the self was exercised in a largely communal and institutional framework. (...) It is not a matter of renouncing the world and others, but of an alternative modulation of the this relation to the other by care of the self. (Gros 2005b, 701)

A good illustration of this claim would be the problematization of *parrhesia*, which represented an important focus for late Foucault. Some commentators even believe that *parrhesia* is the crucial feature of the aesthetics of existence (see, for instance, Simpson 2012). The term *parrhesia* refers to truthful or fearless speech. In reading the Greeks, Foucault states that it is the commitment to “say what has to be said, what we want to say, what we think ought to be said because it is necessary, useful, and true” (2005, 366). The fact of Foucault talking about truth may seem puzzling at first glance, but we should realize by now what he has in mind when he uses the word “truth”. Like Nietzsche, Foucault sees truth as a useful fiction. Truth exists in the power relations, and it functions not only to establish domination, but also to stem its impact. An inspired depiction of Foucauldian truth is offered by O’Leary, who claims that such a fiction

relates to reality by opening up virtual spaces that allow us to engage in a potentially transformative relation with the world; to bring about that which does not exist and to transform that which does exist. (O’Leary 2009, 87)

Socrates as the *parrhesiastes* par excellence is the one who takes great risk in questioning the accredited truths and practices of the Athenian society. His ethical work upon himself engages Socrates in tensed relationships with his fellow citizens, who are criticized for not taking care of themselves, or for their insufficient reflection. The same case goes for the Cynics, who challenged the comfortable thinking and behavior of their contemporaries. This was Nietzsche’s case as well, who – in Rorty’s view (1989, 96-108) –, made his life

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a work of art precisely by his critical stance towards his inherited cultural present. For Foucault, the critique of the present as a voice of an alternative present is one of the most important features of philosophy. In today's world, the activity of inventing new forms of criticisms is an urgent task that links the aesthetics of existence with political engagement. Interpreting Kant's "What is Enlightenment?", the French thinker claims that

we must obviously give a more positive content to what may be a philosophical ethos consisting in a critique of what we are saying, thinking, and doing, through a historical ontology of ourselves. (Foucault 1984d, 45)

So far, I have tried to answer the first line of objections regarding late Foucault's lack of public commitment. The other pattern of criticism states that – in the absence of a normative and procedural account of ethics – the aesthetics of existence leads to immoralism and individualism. Such objections are inspired either by a Habermasian perspective, or by the exigencies of analytic moral philosophy. This allegation is both easy and difficult to answer. It is difficult, because the whole collection of debates and arguments involved in these critiques is too vast and complex to approach in an article. But, at the same time, it is easy to answer such an objection, because it is anchored in a completely different field of presuppositions. Given the present situation, my strategy of answering is the latter. That is why I will lay open those presuppositions without entering in detail. Instead I will show that Foucault's ethics is constructed on a different set of assumptions, which have led him to a radically distinct purpose.

Following Habermas, Th. McCarthy argues that Foucault's representation of traditional morality, focused on codes and universal values, misses the point of "formal, procedural models" of modern ethics (McCarthy obviously refers here to Kant). In McCarthy's view, this point is to "establish a general framework of justice within which individuals and groups may pursue different conceptions of the good or beautiful life" (McCarthy 1994, 270-271). In other words, Foucault's ethics lacks a rational model of ethical evaluation. This is why it would be unable to advocate between moral disagreements, or to give an account of moral progress.

The presupposition of such a demand lies in the expectation that "serious" ethics can reveal moral truths and, in this way, it can set out an

objective decision making procedure. For the critics who share a view like this, the essential aim of moral philosophy is to find a practical solution, which can be embodied in laws, policies and other institutional regulations. But to ask this from Foucault would obviously be a misunderstanding. I am not saying that such a request is unreasonable *per se*, but rather that it is a mistake to ask a philosopher to give an account of something which he precisely rejects. And some critics are accusing late Foucault for not giving a normativist account of morality. But this is precisely what Foucault avoided his entire life. For him, the positive task of philosophy is the critique itself; not the discovery of an objective truth, neither a “politics of imperatives”. Asking late Foucault a thing like these is like asking late Wittgenstein to give a more metaphysical and etymological account of meaning and truth. It is reasonable to judge an entire philosophy for lacking a thing or another, but we cannot ask that a certain piece of one’s philosophy to contradict his entire view, just to be in accordance to an objection that we address precisely to his general perspective. In this regard, we cannot judge Foucault’s aesthetics of existence for lacking a normative stance, since the critique of such a stance was a constant target for Foucault. Another answer to the objection above would be that we do not have to be Foucauldians all the way. We can learn the lessons of both Habermas (or Kant, or analytic ethics) and Foucault. The former would give us objective solutions for our public choices, and the latter would give us a critique of its potential dangers. In this sense, Foucault’s philosophy could function as an excellent therapy.

However one might say that Foucault’s ethical project it is still wrong, because it is contradictory. The contradiction lies in the fact that, on one hand, Foucault was repudiating a normative point of view, but, on the other hand, he urged us to do something about ourselves. Foucault is at the same time anti-normative and normative; and this is contradictory. A possible answer would be that it would be an error to take Foucault’s use of normative terms as a politics of imperatives. When Foucault uses words like “we should”, “we must”, “we have to”, these words do not bear moral weight. As we have already seen, he is pointing at a possibility rather than formulating an injunction. But nevertheless, the aesthetics of existence is publicly engaged and is depicted as a desirable model. This means an advisable model, i.e. an imperative one. Another answer to this last objection would be that Foucault’s recommendations are not imperatives in a Kantian sense. His attitude is not entirely normative, but descriptive to a large extent. I mean descriptive in the same way that was Aristotelian ethics. In *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle does

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not offer a codified morality, but a model of happiness, conditioned by the cultivation of character. Ethical virtues are not imperatives, but conditional standards (If you want to be happy, you have to be virtuous). And – since I’ve mentioned Aristotle – we should bear in mind that the Greek *ethos* meant, among others, “character”, “habit” or “custom”. Though he was not fond of Aristotle, Foucault is not that far from the Stagirite. Foucauldian ethics is not a theory of moral regulations, but an account of ethical habits. It is not a normatively based code of conduct, but a general outlook, a perspective on a contemporary version of “good life”. Not a single version, but a multitude of possibilities through which the selves folds and unfolds in an uncodifiable fashion.

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Rethinking the Political Discourse Through the Lens of Feminism in Contemporary Society: Corporate Feminism and the Act of Consumption as Means to Social Change*

Venera Dimulescu

In the western world, Third Wave Feminism has developed at the high point of consumerism. Due to the sophisticated process of globalization and the rise of identity politics, major corporations have incorporated into their marketing strategies the idea of diversity and other emancipatory principles that serve as a standpoint in selling their products. For the female subject, the process of mainstreaming feminist ideas seems to be the best opportunity for social change. However, the complex relationship built between human consumers and their objects of desire, as well as today's urge for personal identity, raise the question whether corporate feminism does challenge the status-quo or not. The present study is an inquiry into the current problem of feminism as commodity value and its role as a subversive act towards the already established normativity in contemporary western societies.

Third Wave Feminism and Transversal Politics: Dialogue as Means of Social Change

In a historical context, third wave feminism is defined by the new political discourse that followed the downfall of communism, the increasing global economy, and the improved dynamics of corporations. At a chronological level, the separation between the second and the third wave occurred at the beginning of the '90s (Buszek 2000).

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The politics of the new generation of feminists includes both dealing with the new threats to women's rights, and the critique of former feminist ideas. Unlike the second wave's struggle for universalization and difference, the third wave's goal is to embrace women's hybrid experiences and deconstruct categorical thinking using inclusion and investigation as strategies.

One of the main purposes of the second wave feminism was spreading solidarity between all women, regardless of their particularities and differences. Its members wanted to develop a civic fortress that would raise women's voice within society. But this approach brought also an essentialist way of thinking about the female subjects. The difference argument, used by the second wave feminists, incorporated the idea that women should form a privileged social category regarding their abilities and practices, thus enabling the gender binary masculine/feminine (Krolokke and Sorensen 2006; McRobbie 2008). The need to affirm and empower a set of core values of femininity in order to establish a certain female identity, resulted in an increased opposition between the masculine and feminine subjects and in a perpetuation of the same oppressive normative order (Gillis, Howie and Munford 2004).

Third wave feminism, as a critical approach of the second wave, defines the conceptual transition from identity politics to transversal politics, a cultural and political opportunity for enabling a dialogue between women at a transnational level.

Globalization, in its current stage, developed over the past few decades, has encouraged an intercultural dialogue throughout the world at the level of race, gender, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation. Julia Kristeva named this phenomenon the symbolic common denominator (Kristeva 1981, 15). This concept covers the innate process of globalization which presumes the cultural and historical identification of nations or communities with larger contexts, beyond geographical borders.

In other words, globalization facilitates the emergence of "social territories" within which groups of people such as European teenagers or women of a certain age identify themselves with a set of particular characteristics yet subscribing at the same time to more general traits from a shared cultural legacy. This way, the symbolic common denominator becomes "the cultural and religious memory forged by the interweaving of history and geography" (Kristeva 1981, 13).

Naomi Klein also explains this phenomenon as the global village effect (Naomi Klein 2000, 18) which follows the current proliferation of consumerism and the implicit economic development of corporations. Following her argument, the global village is an economic construction which aims to cross

identity borders and create a shared means of communication between people of different races and nationalities.

In fact, argues Klein, the global village is an illusion, as the symbolic bridge aimed at improving people's connections is an economic project based on profit and corporate investments which "strengthens the social and economic inequalities and narrows cultural options" (Naomi Klein 2000, 18). The only thing that people share at a basic level is the act of consumption.

Given this cultural and economic context, transversal politics of the third wave feminism was implemented as a reaction to the negative effects of globalization and consumerism, as well as a new conceptual framework that would enrich women's experiences and combat their social oppression. The concept of transversal politics demands that a dialogue between women of different nationalities, religions and races is necessary in order to prevent or diminish social injustices: "The idea is that each participant in the dialogue brings with her a rooting in her own membership and identity, but at the same time tries to shift in order to engage in exchange with women who have different membership and identity" (Nira Yuval-Davis 1997). Based on the epistemological argument according to which every positioning creates its own reality, we cannot validate just one way of thinking in order to know the "truth", therefore transversal politics promises a priori respect for all women's experiences and cultural backgrounds (Nira Yuval-Davis 1997).

What Nira Yuval-Davis asserts is the need for new feminist tools that would critically challenge the essentialist perspective of the previous generation regarding women's identities, tools that would eventually bring social change.

However, in a contemporary society that is culturally and economically shaped by the growing forces of consumerism, deconstructions of traditional representations of femininity that would actually bring social changes are quite hard to imagine.

Corporate Feminism and the Act of Consumption as a Method of Feminist Politics

During the last couple of decades a new type of feminism has emerged as a self-proclaimed by-product of the groundwork of the third wave's political agenda.

Market feminism or corporate feminism developed as a right-wing oriented political project absorbed by neoliberalism and incorporated into the basic systems of power in contemporary western societies: "It engages women

and men in business, academia, and government and speaks a new language of gender balance and equality as an asset for business and economic development” (Prugl 2014, 1).

In a consumerist global economy the appropriation of feminism and neoliberalism was possible in the context of privatization, deregulation and the increasing power of corporations over the economic sector of a state. The main factors that facilitated the entwining of the two ideologies are the diminished authority of state apparatuses and the reorientation of neoliberalism to the *politics of recognition*, due to the growing voices of minorities and their political awareness (Prugl 2014). Thus, market feminism is based on the shift of power from the institutions of the state to the civil society.

However, this so called power of the civil society is shaped by the indisputable laws of the economic market: “It encompasses a discourse which generates individuals as entrepreneurs of the self and favors the creation of external environments that lead individuals to self-monitor so that they conduct themselves in ways that respond to market principles” (Prugl 2014, 7).

Corporate feminism has reached the civil society in the western world through the political projects of multinationals. Mainstreaming basic ideas about gender equality and female emancipation was the key element in the creation of economic projects that would respond to a greater market and carry the promise of economic growth of the companies. The feminist messages which are used in mainstreaming belong to the pluralist and anti-essentialist perspectives of the third wave political discourse, that emphasize women’s right to agency and free choice.

We can identify two branches of corporate feminism:

1. Corporate feminism as a socio-political manifest advocated by empowered right-wing women
2. Corporate feminism as a product of consumerism used in market strategies in order to meet minorities’ need for representation and cover a diversified clientele.

The first branch is based on written works such as *Why Women Still can’t Have It All* and *Lean In*, elaborated by successful women – Anne Marie Slaughter, respectively Sheryl Sandberg – and sold as an appeal to the authority of some female subjects who can assert through their personal example the possibility of real social change.

The idea of social change is thus delivered as the accomplished attempt to ascend on the hierarchical scale of power within western societies.

Moreover, the works of corporate representatives reclaim the female consciousness as the will to achieve higher social status within the same dominant socio-political order. In other words, these works are a mode of

co-opting women into the neoliberal system of power: “This mode of governance is neither limited to the economic sphere nor to state policies but rather produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior and a new organization of the social” (Rottenberg 2013, 420).

The discourse implied by these motivational writings recognizes gender inequalities within current social order in a manner that individualizes social responsibility and encourages women to overcome social injustice at a personal level. In fact, some will argue, this is an attempt to prevent any form of collective resistance towards the political system, avoiding the coagulation of a dialogue between women and their experiences: “This subject willingly and forcibly acknowledges continued gender inequality but (...) her feminism is so individuated that it has been completely unmoored from any notion of social inequality and consequently cannot offer any sustained analytic of the structures of male dominance, power, or privilege. In this emergent feminism, then, there is a liberal wrapping, while the content – namely, its mode of operation – is neoliberal through and through” (Rottenberg 2013, 425).

What these manifestoes actually do is to limit the problem of gender inequalities to the lack of women representatives in the higher social positions within contemporary societies.

The female subject is thus morally constructed according to her efficiency in achieving financial independence and wealth: “Neoliberal feminism is predominantly concerned with instating a feminist subject who epitomizes *self-responsibility*, and who no longer demands anything from the state or the government, or even from men as a group” (Rottenberg 2013, 428).

A primary concern seems to be the internalization of the desire of social ascension as an end in itself which would alienate women from the real aims of feminism and its struggle with the subversion of the status-quo.

The second branch of corporate feminism implies the commodification of feminist ideas by organizations in order to comply with the request of the consumerist markets. Companies as Body Shop, Nike, Calvin Klein or MAC started to use female protagonists in contexts which would imply a political discourse: “Gender inequality could be solved by buying the right brand of cigarettes, the right toys for little girls, the right suit for the businesswoman” (Goodman and Cohen 2003). There are advertising campaigns that would create a politically correct discourse for their products in order to be associated with ideas about independence and free speech. Companies such as Virginia Slims launched a marketing campaign called “You’ve come a long way, baby” that

promotes women's independence through the consumption of highly addictive products: cigarettes (Johnston and Taylor 2008, paragraph 1).

Minorities' need for public representation was greeted with big campaigns with large profit by corporations. Thus, the principles that founded identity politics in order to bring social change were assimilated and reconstructed by advertising agencies and sold as symbols of consumption.

Some authors named feminist consumerism the phenomenon of promoting feminist principles as a ritual of consumption in contemporary societies: "We use the term feminist consumerism a phenomenon with potential to partially disrupt gender norms, to emphasize the Dove campaign's evolution alongside a broader culture-ideology of consumerism, understood as a way of life dedicated to the possession and use of consumer goods and rooted in the capitalist need to sell an ever-expanding roster of commodities in a globalized economy" (Johnston and Taylor 2008, paragraph 5).

Some individuals may see the Dove campaign mentioned, called "Real Beauty", as an attempt to raise public consciousness regarding social constructions of feminine beauty. Dove's advertising stories about natural beauty includes female models that defy traditional standards of femininity, models that resemble ordinary women's bodies, with different shapes and weight.

In fact, the real issue that organizations must face in the process of mainstreaming is the coherence and compatibility that the feminist ideology has with the market.

D'Enbeau and Buzzanell explain the tension between financial viability and feminist ideology that companies have to manage, through three stages that shape their political and economic projects: mainstreaming, co-optation and reconstruction (D'Enbeau and Buzzanell 2011).

The actual process of mainstreaming implies the action of taking over an ideology and deliver it to the majority of a population through a revisited discourse that would guarantee easy access to the masses. Through co-optation the message is fragmented and its general traits are depicted and rewritten according to the economic plan of its investors. In this case, the third stage, naming the reconstruction of the ideology, would even imply changing the core basis of the message. We can notice, however, that the three stages are described as methods to rethinking the feminist discourse through mainstreaming only through the lens of its position towards financial viability.

Having settled the economic costs and benefits, multinationals seek to adapt the ideology without adjusting the financial plan. The co-optation of feminism by the dominant discourse of the market implies the risk of eluding

any form of social change as long as the financial interests are not damaged. Moreover, harboring the viability plan without reconsidering its effects in relation to the message that is summoned to meet the market would only enable a reiteration of the same hegemonic needs meant to be sold.

Furthermore, one of the main issues involving corporatism and the co-optation and commodification of feminism in the context of consumerist western societies is that the means that is considered to sustain the revolt and social and political transformations of the status-quo is constructed through the universal act of consumption. We must, therefore, analyze and contextualize the mechanisms of consumption in relation to its supposedly subversive outcome.

In order to analyze its effects and consequences we must understand the powerful dynamics of consumerism.

Consumption and the Improved Dynamics of Corporations

a. Consumerism as a Social and Cultural Phenomenon

As a phenomenon, consumerism can be resumed as the production and consumption of commodities. The act of consuming is determined by both the utility of the objects and their symbolic meaning that generates the desire to buy them: “Goods are consumed not only for their material characteristics but even more for what they symbolize – their meanings, associations, and their involvement in our self-image” (Goodman and Cohen 2003, 2). Through the act of buying, the individual becomes an agent in the process of constructing the object. He invests it with personal meaning beyond the given narratives of advertising (Bourdieu 1984).

Consumption has always been an inherent process within societies and cultures at a global level. However, its contemporary representations are shaped in an unique, unprecedented form. Despite its previous cultural and social determinants, nowadays, the act of consumption is perceived as an urgent, frequent need for members of communities. During the 20th century, it became a social value in itself, and stopped being a reflection of local cultural values (Goodman and Cohen 2003). Due to the economic expansion of corporations and the complex process of advertising, consumption has entered every compartment of modern life, transforming every social context into an opportunity to celebrate itself.

According to Simmel, the objects of desire are assessed according to their level of accessibility. The harder the way to obtain it, the bigger the value attached to it (Simmel 2005).

This way, the action of buying becomes a sacrificial commitment to the exchange system measured in terms of the labor and the money that are necessary in order to accomplish the act of consumption.

As another effect of globalization the marketing strategies have developed into what Naomi Klein called “the post-national vision”, an universal discourse promoted through advertising that would create a “global individual style” for consumers.

Thus, their objects of desire would become referential to a human experience that transcends local identities and unifies the diversity of the customers into one universal style and also boost the profit (Naomi Klein 2000, 18).

In her book, Naomi Klein explores the evolution of corporate dynamics and the expanding phenomenon of branding, as two elementary factors in the development of present day consumerism (Naomi Klein 2000).

The process of branding, as a 20th century creation, evokes the strategy used by corporations to create an identity to their products. The logo, as a bearer of signification, serves as an international mark for specific kinds of commodities: “(...) logos are the closest to the idea of international language, recognizable and understood worldwide, being even more popular than English language” (Naomi Klein 2000, 21).

The real competition between corporations takes place in the advertising sector, where companies are struggling to create more convincing images associated to their brands. This way, commercials are becoming more complex by constructing narratives about human lives from different social and cultural backgrounds in order to attract a wider area of potential consumers.

According to Klein, the brands that corporations sell are symbols of seductive human experiences and lifestyles which induce fascination into people’s minds, creating and preserving their need to consume them (Naomi Klein 2000, 40). Moreover, logos contain and address to their customers the promise of social and personal fulfillment through shopping.

We can identify two kinds of marketing strategies that were and are performed since the second half of 20th century:

1. The concept of individualization. For the baby boom generation, this strategy allowed the advertising companies to promote a lifestyle based on “uniqueness” and “personal choice” guaranteed through the act of consumption.
2. As for the x generation, advertising agencies are focused on the contemporary political revolts and try to adapt to the growing struggles of minorities within societies. Their fight against the status-quo opened up a new potential market never explored until

then. The idea of diversity became a central reference for corporations and their brands: “(...) as all the market researchers agreed that diversity could be the main source of profit from this specific demographic category, the only thing that open-minded corporations had to do was to incorporate into their brands variations on the theme of diversity” (Naomi Klein 2000, 112-113).

Using strategic tools such as the inclusion of diversity and reclaiming the right to personal identity in their campaigns, multinationals aimed to construct a political correct discourse that could be addressed to all contemporary individuals, regardless of race, gender, nationality. The campaigns that promote politically correct narratives belong to a higher strategy of constructing a subversive persona that would correspond to the brand and seduce even the most eccentric individuals.

However, the impact that commodities have on individuals’ lives and their personal identities doesn’t seem to encourage people to build a collective struggle, it rather convinces them to engage in a difficult relationship with their own image.

b. The Construction of the Relationship Between Subjects and Objects in a Global Economy

The process of redefining the meaning of objects in consumer societies has astranged objects from their traditional significations. Modern conditions of consumption have promised consumers the freedom to assess and appreciate goods. According to Simmel, this freedom of association which serves as a way of empowerment can be defined as “abstract thinking of objects” (Simmel 2005).

The individual is no longer forced to understand a specific meaning associated with an object, as the object in question has lost its local and cultural identity: “The individual is distracted from the reality of their domination in the class system by the illusory freedoms of personal choice” (Lunt and Livingstone 1992, 9).

Despite individuals’ freedom to give commodities personal value, their ability to evaluate is defined by a setting that exposes and promotes certain social and cultural characteristics to the objects advertised. There are “regimes of value”, as Appadurai called them, which describe different degrees of globally agreed value associated to goods: “(...) when a commodity has globally agreed value, this transcends local, culturally grounded boundaries and dislocates the meaning of a thing from the local system” (Lunt and Livingstone 1992, 14).

Appadurai asserts that the need for objects is rather rehearsed through social practices than being an effect of profound human desire (Appadurai, 1986).

Miller describes the process of integration of one's goods into his personal life as objectification, which includes the transformation of the object seen as an external, standardized valuable good, into an internalized value shaped by the needs of the customer. Thus, the object can be represented as part of the individual's personal development (Miller 1987).

The relationship between human beings and their objects of desire becomes a modern ritual in contemporary consumer societies that also affects gender relations.

The problem with the correlation between a counter-cultural discourse and commodities is that there is no active challenge in the act of consumption. Having satisfied the need to buy a new item that serves as a symbol for the concept of women's independence doesn't bring social justice to female subjects.

Through objectification, the very act of consumption becomes an actual life choice, an apparent personal decision that influences and shapes individuals' identities and development. Advertisers' role playing as storytellers makes even more confusing to determine who is in fact the agent of decision-making.

In a more traditional manner, some campaigns have strengthened gender inequalities through their representations of household and domestic partnerships.

Through advertising, the domestic space is illustrated as an idealized dwelling place that offers couples the perfect context to enjoy their commodities. This place enables their active evaluation of their goods and the positive feelings that they generate. Yet this comfortable home also reveals the way that gender roles are negotiated that are often reproductions of ready-made ideologies. Gender relations are frequently perceived as domestic partnerships based on specific access to resources (Lunt and Livingstone 1992, 22). According to their established roles, the female or male subject has opened access to the resources and goods assigned in their domestic contract.

Distribution of resources within homes negotiates the access to products as well as the needs and rights of individuals regarding their use.

If gender roles are reproductions of traditional and patriarchal definitions, then the needs and rights of individuals are also shaped according to them.

Nancy Frazer proposed a reconsidering of gender prescriptions by rewriting them in relation to a more aware inquiry of inner desires (Frazer 1989). In other words, the starting point of defining one's needs should be a legitimate calculation of their importance in one's everyday life choices.

Nevertheless power relations between feminine and masculine subjects transcend the domestic space and influence individuals' social statuses as consumers, work force, etc: "(...) social identities are fully engaged in the process of bargaining and negotiation that shape access to economic resources, as well as the direction of resource flows both within the household and beyond" (Lunt and Livingstone 1992, 24).

In these circumstances, we may ask how does the act of consumption shape personal identities and construct or deconstruct distributive gender roles?

c. Personal Identity as a Product of Consumption

At an etymological level, identity comes from latin and signifies something that is consistent in its distinctiveness. For animals, as well as for humans, identity represented the process of naming something in order to distinguish it from the other members of the species.

Gabriel and Lang named two phases in the construction of human identity. The first one, forensic identity, is a concept used to describe the political dimension, understood as a way of registration and surveillance performed by the state in order to control its citizens and is practiced through identity card checks, fingerprinting and so on (Gabriel and Lang 2006).

The second refers to identity as a sociological and psychological concept. As the first dimension of human identity is considered to be fixed, given by birth, the latter is a fluid construction derived from a series of socio-cultural factors. According to the authors, psychological identity is the result of the encounter with the other members of community and their influences, in the form of institutional or non-institutional education, family, group of friends:

This identity is subjective; it's an individual's answer to questions such as *Who am I?* and *In what ways am I different from others?* This is a changing, precarious problematic entity, the product of an individual's perpetual adaptation to his or her environment. (Gabriel and Lang 2006, 82)

As an effect of post-structuralism, in contemporary societies the concept of identity becomes a constant process of reappraisal and enrichment of personal biographic narratives. (Giddens 1991). Thus, the modern condition of identity becomes a negotiation between local and global influences, as there are no grand narratives and universal systems of values to depend upon: "Identity,

in this formulation, does not lie in any fixed attributes of personality or self, still less in certain fixed forms of behavior. (...) Identity, then, can be seen as a story that a person writes and rewrites about him or himself, never reaching the end until they die, and always rewriting the earlier parts, so that the activity of writing becomes itself part of the story” (Gabriel and Lang 2006, 83).

The problem of identity at the intersection of globalization and consumerism becomes more problematic due to the illusion of free choice. The vast array of options as an effect of global economy and cultural influences has encountered the fragmented self of individuals and their need for personal identity.

The ritual of consumption has become the main practice of identity seeking, transforming consumerism in a substitute for it. As we discussed earlier, individuals enjoy commodities as extensions of their personal life, filling them with personal meanings, as well as preserving the image constructed through advertising: “The identity of the consumer is tied with the identity not only of the brand, but of the company that produces it” (Davidson 1992, quoted in Gabriel and Lang 2006, 84).

In the process of representing an object of consumption, the marketing strategies create an image and an identity associated with it, aiming towards a certain type of personality. Advertising also teaches the individual to become aware of a different function of the objects, the ability to achieve social status. Possessions can boost self-esteem and attract respect or fame.

Conclusions

By being associated with an image of power and independence, women are promised the ability to rewrite their story and build a confident self. Commodities carry this promise and encourage the female subject to buy an image of power that any woman would like to be associated with.

They are references of a strong and seductive persona. Yet social and political empowerment cannot be achieved without a critical approach towards the pre-existent normativity. Johnston and Taylor accuse feminist consumerism of lacking consistency as a subversive act, acting, in reverse, as a phenomenon determined by brand loyalty and profit based policies (Johnston and Taylor 2008).

Furthermore, the advertised appraisal of achieving emancipatory statuses and socio-political rights through consumption transforms a false premise into a simulation of social change. The act of buying a Dove body lotion that was envisaged as a form of revolt against constructed beauty myths becomes, in the

phantasm of the consumer, a means of rebellion. Having satisfied his need, the consumer will regard the act of consumption as an active fight against social injustices or gender inequalities. This way, consumption acts as one of the mechanisms of oblivion that foster double-standards in human behavior.

So far, corporate feminism failed to engage in the principles of third wave feminism. The exclusive ritual of consumption does not generate a transnational dialogue between women.

The only connection created was through the contemporary practices of consumerism. The real issues that arrest women's emancipation, such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, lack of women's voices within politics or the oppressive cultural and social representations of femininity, are forgotten between the all-consuming striving for objects of desire and the temporary independence and relief that come along with the finished act of shopping.

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The (Almost Hidden) Human Model of Some Social and Political Theorizations of Today's Society*

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Introduction

The aim of our paper is to focus on certain philosophical presuppositions, some explicit, many others hidden, involved in several explanatory approaches of a democracy that seems more and more built in the name and for the sake of consumption and the neoliberal agenda. Without attempting to exhaust the topic, we will try however to highlight some theoretical constants (the ludic character, the mobility, etc.) that could help in shaping a veritable model of human subjectivity in our society, at least from the point of view of this kind of theorizations. We have named this model one of a *post-post-modern* kind, i.e. one that – in our view – wants to synthetically incorporate the “advantages” of both instrumental rationality of modernity and the playful creativity of postmodernity¹.

However, we are not willing to get into the somewhat significant debate about “post-post-modernism” that is carried out among today's scholars, nor to trace in detail the recent history of this term. The reason is quite simple: doing this would considerably overshadow what we want to say about our main topic. Evidently, this does not mean that this identification is somewhat un-important or contingent for us. In fact, we chose to mention here only some significant guidelines related to this topic. Probably – “probably”, as in all factual

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¹ We also point out sketchily the possibility of an ideological use of this model, due the fact that it seems to represent more an uncritical projection or desire and an illicit extrapolation from certain social categories, than a universal human reality. For that last particular reason it is possible to affirm that this kind of analysis has not only a theoretical descriptive role, but also a practical tenure.

searching-and-findings of origins –, the term was first used academically by the architect Tom Turner in his urban planning manifesto from 1995 (see Turner 1995). Other landmarks for the topic should be an article signed by Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010)² and a recent book of Jeffrey Nealon (2012).

Opting in their turn for the term *metamodernism*, Vermeulen and van den Akker add that “this modernism is characterized by the oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment”. More precisely, “metamodernism should be situated epistemologically *with* (post) modernism, ontologically *between* (post) modernism, and historically *beyond* (post) modernism” (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2010)³. Despite these very interesting approaches (and some others, many of them limited to the realm of art criticism / art history), we should add that, in our opinion, the term lacks an extended and necessary theorization.

On the other hand, we retained and punctually incorporated the core idea of Jeffrey Nealon, who, in his turn, works on the footsteps of Frederic Jameson’s *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). Thus, in the general framework of a dependence of the cultural on the economic logic of capitalism (whatever its forms), we accept that “capitalism itself is the thing that’s intensified most radically since Jameson began doing his work on postmodernism in the 1970s and’80. The ‘late’ capitalism of that era (...) has since intensified into the ‘just-in-time’ (...) capitalism of our neoliberal era” (Nealon 2012, IX-X).

² The two authors are not at all contended with the term we chose to use, appreciating in their article that “a number of critics have simply adopted the syntactically correct but semantically meaningless term post-postmodernism.” But, despite their option about the terms, we appreciate that the reality described by them is quite the same. Of course, we might also think about another name for this post-post-modern “reality”, as Vermeulen and van den Akker effectively did and as Linda Hutcheon suggested earlier in the epilogue of her second edition of *The Politics of Postmodernism*, one which is better suited for the fact that “[t]he postmodern moment has passed, even if its discursive strategies and its ideological critique continue to live on – as do those of modernism – in our contemporary twenty-first century World” (Hutcheon 2002, 181). Even though it is very instructive, this would also mean to substantially open another level of investigation, too meta-theoretical for this kind of study.

³ In other place, they describe metamodernism more plastically, as being the “tension, oscillating between – and beyond – the electropositive nitrates of the modern and the electronegative metals of the postmodern”.

Finally, for this introductory remarks, as we shall have the opportunity to point again to, in our use of the term what is important is the idea of emphasizing that *both* (classical) modernity and postmodernity are ‘feeding’ this model of human subjectivity as identified by us. It is thus essentially a question about a further integration (that “anesthetizes” the previous oppositions) and even, paradoxically enough, a mutual potentialization of one by the other in some of their key elements⁴. This aspect is well captured in *oxymoronic formulations* like those of Vermeulen and van den Akker (they describe the attitude of the current generation as “informed naivety” or “pragmatic idealism”; they also show that “[i]nspired by a modern naïveté yet informed by postmodern skepticism, the metamodern discourse consciously commits itself to an impossible possibility”). Of course, generally speaking, oxymora are very spectacular; as a consequence, we have to be very attentive in “filling” these words with concrete realities.

The Model

At the beginning of the 21st century, in a seminal work suggestively titled *Consumers and Citizens*, Nestor García Canclini tried to stress some features of the Latin American societies from the point of the political dimension. Besides the historical facts – important and dramatic too – of a switch in this region from a previous mainly European citizen-based participative model to a US consumer-based model of expressing the (political) presence in society⁵, what appear to us to be noteworthy is the model itself. In García Canclini’s words, we are confronted now (in Latin America) with “*a model of society in which many state functions have disappeared or been assumed by private corporations, and in which social participation is organized through consumption rather than through the exercise of citizenship* (our emphasis)” (García Canclini 2001, 5). This means that we can correctly equate Latin American civil societies with “atomized ensembles of consumers” (García Canclini 2001, 5).

⁴ We do not have the space here for such an investigation, but a further – and legitimate – point should question the possibility of a deep affinity between the two previous theorized subjectivities, i.e. the modern and the postmodern.

⁵ This is also important for the reason that it shows a fast spreading, i.e. a globalization of the consumerist US-originated model.

Of course, this is the accurate picture for the most part of the world, if not in practice, at least in theory (or, if not until now in the real practice, at least in the desired one of the future), due to the fact that identities constituted around national symbols have been constantly gnawed and obsoleted lately by economic, technological, and cultural changes. But far from being nostalgic about the disappearance of classical democracy configuration, García Canclini hopes to identify the positive points in this somehow implacable process. Put shortly, this equates to assert the current possibility of the citizens of fighting more directly and efficiently for the fulfillment of (at least) some of their legitimate rights and interests that were previously hard to be satisfied. The full scene is in fact synthesized as such by him:

For many men and women, especially youth, the questions specific to citizenship, such as how we inform ourselves and who represents our interests, are answered more often than not through private consumption of commodities and media offerings than through the abstract rules of democracy or through participation in discredited political organizations. This process could be understood as loss or depoliticization from the perspective of the ideals of liberal or enlightened democracy. But we may also posit, as do James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, that the political notion of citizenship is expanded by including rights to housing, health, education, and the access to other goods through consumption. It is in this sense that I propose reconceptualizing consumption, not as a mere setting for useless expenditures and irrational impulses, but as a site that is good for thinking, where a good part of economic, sociopolitical, and psychological rationality is organized in all societies. (García Canclini 2001, 5)

We want to particularly stress this semantic turn in understanding consumption as *a positive and also – what is more important – as a political fact* instrumentalised by García Canclini and others⁶ because one main point of

⁶ Consumerism was seen critically, in the aftermath of Baudrillard, but with deep roots in Veblen, Heidegger et alia, as a “degenerescence” of Western society, and positively from a neo-liberal point of view, as a sign of human liberty and accomplishment; many more recent social theories – some of them briefly investigated by us – seem (to want) to

our article consists exactly in identifying and briefly exposing *a new model of subjectivity* (implying as such, as we will see, a new kind of rationality) that is embedded in nowadays consumerist behavior, partly in the effective practice of Western middle-class humans and partly in the illicit (not to say even ideological) extrapolation that impregnates most of cultural and political theories, especially those developed in the context of globalization trends / processes. Practically, García Canclini is refurbishing the consumption, is “reconceptualizing” it in his own words, which presupposes, as we saw, its re-rationalization – finding the hidden rationality, i.e. the hidden *effective and immediate advantages*, of consumerism; and he does this without paying much attention to include and analyze consumerism among the very efficient globalizing neoliberal propaganda. His approach is intended to be firstly an anthropological-cultural one, not a critical analysis of society. The result is more descriptive and less normative, more neutral and scientific in a narrow objective sense. Thus this analysis captures only the effects seen as “facts” and does not include (“metaphysical”) presuppositions and further connections about their causes.

On the other hand, some classical rights that were linked with citizenship and supposed to be targeted through struggles at a national-state level are now considered to be more accurately “represented” by a universalist vehicle driven by the interest of the market. The market, and not the state, could / should be the real, efficient promoter of the human rights. Aihwa Ong, for example, asserts that “[w]e used to think of different dimensions of citizenship – rights, entitlements, a state, territoriality, etc. – as more or less tied together. Increasingly, some of these components are becoming disarticulated from each other, and articulated with diverse universalizing norms defined by markets, neoliberal values, or human rights” (Ong 2006, 500). It is interesting to notice in this quotation the contiguity (if not the peaceful harmony) of the human rights with the market and neoliberal norms⁷.

It could then be said that the market and the consumptionist model are affecting the political on a double level: on a general one, by vehiculating and

consider consumerism in a (pretended) “realistic” manner, as an inescapable process of nowadays society, consequently trying to describe “scientifically” (only) the facts – but mostly managing to anticipate and propagate them, being as such an “efficient agent” – consciously or not – who put the shoulder to the wheel in the concrete building of this reality itself.

⁷ He adds that in this “shifting political landscape (...) heterogeneous populations claim diverse rights and benefits associated with citizenship, as well as universalizing criteria of neoliberal norms or human rights” (Ong 2006, 500).

universally imposing the universal human rights (the economical is doing here, allegedly in an impersonal fashion, by itself, the former job of the political); and on an individual one, by locally transforming us in “rational units” of calculating and pursuing the “real” individual interest, i.e. in personal efficient entrepreneurs.

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Let’s now focus on another perspective close to it, one developed in some theorizations of cultural globalization. In this sense, we tried to stress in a previous article⁸ the hidden presuppositions of the concept of *glocalization*, starting mainly from the work of George Ritzer⁹. Glocalization is a term more and more used by scholars with the intention to describe the “reality” of today fundamental mobility¹⁰ of citizens and the hybridization of cultures. In fact we also identified on that occasion what might be called a (new) philosophical model of the human subject that underlies this concept.

Why is the kind of analysis we developed important then? First of all, because it revealed that the model of subjectivity in question is one that exhibits only the main features of Western rationality, whether we are speaking of people, let’s say, from USA or from Uganda. Moreover, we saw in it not the form of the modern instrumental rationality, but a “mixture” (for some exegetes even the result of a dialectical *Aufhebung*) between it and the postmodern subjectivity. So it would be quite wrong to present it only in the form of a “weak rationality” as was, in fact, previously proposed by some postmodernist theorizations – it would mean not to capture the neo-liberal component that tries to shape our lives today, in discourse as in reality. Thus, we want to stress by this point that what is now attributed¹¹ to human beings is a stronger individual capacity to participate¹² in society for pursuing their “real” interests. So, we could label it as a “second-order rationality”¹³, in which not only the interested,

⁸ “Some Remarks Concerning the Concept of *Glocalization*”, 2013.

⁹ Highly significant for this particular topic is his *The Globalization of Nothing 2* (2007). But some of its basic aspects are present in many other analysis of globalization.

¹⁰ Fundamental not for all, as Zygmunt Bauman (1998) very well points out.

¹¹ Allegedly or for real, this is another question.

¹² Through another form of participation than the “older”, classical-political one, as we shall further see.

¹³ Of course, if we accept that the rationality praised by the moderns is – only in this model – a “first-order” one. We could label it also a “strong-and-weak rationality”, strong and weak respective to different aspects, of course.

orientated activity of “pure” reason is present but also the capacity of the subject for play, for satisfying desires that are not simply “rational” as such¹⁴. From another – Nietzschean – perspective, this subjectivity could be seen as a compositum of the Apollonian and Dionysian dimensions of human beings. In other words, consumption means reason *and* play, a play (not only a mere calculus) of reason; it involves a “playful reason”. This subject is or wants to be simultaneously a dealer, a scientist and an artist. He knows, he calculates, he plays. His life is the play itself of the intrinsic human power.

Secondly, it should be observed that this model reduces / projects the activity of human beings in a culture to their economic-consumerist-like behavior, “forgetting” all the actions that could be qualified as materially des-interested or as simply politically (or socially, culturally, religiously) driven. The thesis in the background is quite simple and as such very convincing: generally and thoroughly, each man knows better his own desires and interests. We are thus facing here – beyond the efforts of the Marxist critique of ideology or of the psychoanalysis, for example – a process that should exhibit a pure presence, immediacy. Moreover, knowing his own interests is not only an “epistemological” fact, but also a political one – due to the fact that as a rational being, each man will practically pursue himself the better the fulfillment of these desires or interests is. A lot of powerful rhetoric could be added here; we are the best representatives of ourselves, and no structure that mediates politically (parties, parliament, government, labor unions, etc.) could do this better than us; we are functioning, *de facto* and *de jure*, as a one-member party – we are our own party; we are perfectly capable, without any distortions caused externally, i.e. by our very nature, to formulate our own political agenda, to choose *hic et nunc* the issues and forms of action¹⁵.

¹⁴ In an universalist sense.

¹⁵ In the wake of modernity, our rationality – i.e. modern *or* post-modern rationality; or simultaneously both as will see... – is political by its essence. We could say that the reason Descartes spoke about in his *Discourse de la méthode* (in what might be called a – if not *the* – manifesto of modern philosophy) was a political one too, even that the *Discourse* despite all appearances was a veritable political manifesto... For a political (liberal) lecture of Descartes, see Pierre Guenancia, *Descartes et l'ordre politique*. In his view, “la philosophie cartésienne procure à la thèse de la liberté individuelle son plus solide fondement, et permet de réfuter l'ensemble des doctrines où l'individu est toute juste bon à servir de membre à un tout, que ce soit un État, une Église, une communauté en général” (Guenancia 2012, 11).

Of course, following this idea, we could speak quite naturally in our days about the dissolution of the political (or even of the social) – of the political modernly (but also classically in the widest sense) understood¹⁶.

So the political – and also democracy – seems to require necessarily a recalibration, theoretically and practically. Quite paradoxically, there are a lot of affinities between this model and that of Jacques Rancière, despite the liberatory flavor – and the lack of any trace of intellectual cynicism or neoliberal uncritical accommodation – of the second.

*

We are now turning to the model of the political theorized by Rancière, one that implies, as the first step to be made, a sharp critique of the notion of *participation*, a core idea for classic Western modern democracies. For him participation means implacably to activate in a framework offered by a power¹⁷, to play a role in the democratic show directed by the power. In his own words,

the idea of participation blends two ideas of different origins: the reformist idea of necessary mediations between the centre and the periphery, and the revolutionary idea of the permanent involvement of citizen-subjects in every domain. The mixture of the two produces this mongrel idea, assigning to enduring democracy, as its site of exercise, the mere filling of spaces left empty by power. (Rancière 2007, 60)

A participative democracy is in fact reduced to a “perverse” alter ego of the power, it presuppose only an “internal” opposition *inside* the system, which somehow reduplicates the power – briefly, an opposition allowed by the power.

But democracy should mean less programming actions and more spontaneity. The subjects envisaged by Rancière (should) also exhibit more

¹⁶ Alain Touraine, for example, speaks recently in almost exactly these terms about the configuration of our contemporary society. Moreover, in his view, we are now facing – but this is not a negative process at all – the dissolution of the social as such. See, for instance, his *Un nouveau paradigme* (2005).

¹⁷ But it will not be exactly the same case for all the possible solutions? All our actions, whether we want it or not, express necessarily a positioning in a social space created by a power; Foucauldianly speaking, all our discourses, even the liberatory ones, are impregnated, traversed by power.

self-confidence in their power to represent their interests, to play the continuous, endless game of democracy – a game without finality, one that would mean imposing to the players a framework that alters their liberty¹⁸. A core feature of democracy is thus its permanent, protean mobility: “But does not the permanence of democracy reside much rather in its mobility¹⁹, its capacity to shift the sites and forms of participation?” (Rancière 2007, 60). Participation should be unpredictable, kairotic, *hic et nunc*, without the benefit of a previous frame – a play without rules, or a play that defines its rules during its own constitution:

Genuine participation is the invention of that unpredictable subject which momentarily occupies the street, the invention of a movement born of nothing but democracy itself. The guarantee of permanent democracy is not the filling up of all dead times and empty spaces by the forms of participation or of counterpower; it is the continual renewal of the actors and of the forms of their actions, the ever-open possibility of the fresh emergence of this fleeting subject. The test of democracy must ever be in democracy’s own image: versatile, sporadic – and founded in trust. (Rancière 2007, 61)

We should now notice again that what is important in all these political schemas is the ubiquitous and unavoidable priority of the interest of humans in what is *close* for them in an almost material expression²⁰. The political priority

¹⁸ A constant (very serious) problem of these quasi-anarchistic views of politics is what is the *minimal* social and political framework of the game itself (a framework that should not alter the game itself) and *who* must / should be responsible for its “implementation” and “surveillance”. Not to speak about the legitimation of settling violent situations or deep, “centrifugal” crises. Of course, we could invent and even theorize oxymoronic terms like “anarchic ‘government’” (Rancière 2006, 41; Rancière calls it here a “paradox”) in order to “describe” the kind of reality we intend to speak of, but we must agree that it is more an “object of desire” than a political “buildable device”. For a brief but comprehensive analysis of this point, although with opposite conclusions as ours, see Todd May (2012).

¹⁹ We will come back to the topic of the *mobility* included in this current model of the political, even if we will not be able to thoroughly scrutinize its many faces.

²⁰ It is not the aim of the paper to develop this idea, but we think that it is worthwhile to investigate deeper the relation between political (liberal) individualism and the impetuous affirmation of philosophical materialism that characterize the modern era. A category that could significantly intermedicate this link is that of “property”, which is strongly asserted in its preeminence by both of these currents.

of all citizens seems to be exclusively that of their personal (in a very narrow sense) interests. In fact, this seems to be, for many authors of this kind, the real meaning or the real aim of a democratic regime. The political fight consists here in punctual struggles, with very concrete, tangible wins (or very often, to be honest, gains), with an *ad hoc* organization – the condition itself for their authenticity, for their truth.

So, these struggles are to be “cleansed” of all metaphysical stains. The society / the political are not brought into discussion at a general or fundamental level anymore (or at least this is not a point of political struggle, but only for intellectual, academic debates, in forums, scientific congresses or workshops), we are not questioning the power of changing the general framework, offering concomitantly foundations for this. It is not a mere problem of theoretical impossibility in a post-modern framework, but also a question of precaution and deep concern for the quite probable destructive effects – this would be very dangerous: too extremist, too revolutionary, (for many) too leftist. And, as we have already seen, this would also be simply too unreasonable for nowadays men who know very well their *effective* interests. Our democratic actions should be thus more unpredictable, unlike their effects – they should follow closely the new ‘sanctified’ realities, our interests...

The essence of the political consists then, quite paradoxically, in its anti-essentialism. A strong political individualism (presented as we mentioned earlier not as a failure or a blind alley of the democracy, but mostly as its accomplishment), non- or anti-metaphysical in nature, penetrates all these conceptions, from left²¹ to right²².

²¹ One might find the source of this paradox not in a “corruption of the left” (see also the next note), but in Marx himself. There are many analyses that emphasize the individualist dimension of Marxian theory. See, for example, Elster who claims that Marx was – in a normative sense – an “individualist” “[m]ost of the time he was indeed concerned with forging links among individual motives, individual behavior, and aggregate consequences,” 1986, 24) and that one might identify in him certain elements of the rational-choice theory. Of course, Marx is not described by Elster as a *pure* individualist (nor could he be presented as such, in our opinion). What is important here however is the kind of deep aporia between the individual and the collective that structures as such the Marxian thought (and, only as a hypothesis now, the *entire* modern way of envisaging the political).

²² This is precisely the reason for which – at the level of the governance this time – the left government could be nowadays as neoliberal as the right one. A good “reason” – for many

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We should add that in this version of the political / democracy what is very important, besides the concrete results as such, is the fulfillment of the *personal sentiment of very direct participation* as defined above. Being in the street, manifesting loudly your thoughts and your will without mediation whenever you feel the need to do this (but also reducing the political “programmatically”²³ to this), is giving you the psychological certainty of performing by yourself *real* political actions.

*

We have already mentioned the synthesis that is expressed in what I call this post-post-modern subject, a human subject²⁴ that captures in himself concomitantly both the core feature that defines the theoretical model of modernity and that of postmodernity, between an intrinsic power of decision, of rational deliberation, of a sound calculus of his “real” interests, and a hedonistic and ludic component, rehabilitated lately by a postmodernism, but Nietzschean by its “origin”.

This ludic component could be partly captured through the category of *mobility*²⁵. In this context it is instructive to bring into discussion the way in

also a very suitable excuse – for doing that, not only in practice, but also theoretically, is that they are “obliged” to act this way in this almighty globalizing atmosphere. An atmosphere, it is worthwhile to remind, *both real and induced*.

²³ Programmatically anti-programmatically, so to speak.

²⁴ Of course, we speak here again about a model or pattern that somehow “governs” its different instantiations. We are pointing (in all our study) to its general features (and, certainly, not to all of them), to it as an “ideal type”, not to a particular embodiment of it that could “exhaust” in detail its essence.

²⁵ No doubt, this mobility itself should be analyzed in the multiplicity of its forms. Though simplifying, we should at least discriminate – in a prevalent moral sense, trying somehow to “make justice” – in what follows, between a “free” mobility and an imposed one. However, some minimal clarifications should be further offered.

Firstly, and for sure, it is a pertinent (and difficult) question that of the real *free* character of these human mobilities. The entire problem reminds us (structurally speaking) about the free will philosophical dispute as has been developed in history. Again, unfortunately we do not have the space here to discover all the ins and outs of this issue. But, shortly and somehow rhetorical put, it is important to ask ourselves if the individuals, having the power of movement (by their wealth, economic position, etc. – however, even here one could ask if these are not also somehow social *constructs* and not at all “*empirical / given data*”), have also the motivation (initiative, etc.) for this, as *their* or *completely internal*

which the realistic and tough mobility in question is captured (and deformed enough!) by Arjun Appadurai with the almost *artistic* suffix of *-scape*; we have in his presentation all kind of fanciful scenes of mobility or plays on the global stage, with their corresponding *actors*: ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, ideoscapas. Also the way in which he defines *imagination*, a central term for his conception, understood from the beginning as *a social practice* (in a... critical sense for him!), is very suggestive for our critical discussion. So,

[n]o longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of

motivation. However hasty could this remark seem, there is, obviously, an entire ideology of mobility that transforms us – practically and very efficiently too – in *objects* of this mobility and not at all in its *subjects*. We are many times (all the time?) simple transmitters of a previous move, and not its sources.

Secondly, it must be noticed that this mobility is not only a feature of what we called the ludic (or the post-modern) dimension of this subject, it is also a feature of the rational figure of the modern human being, of the projection of his destiny on the scale of the entire world (through geographic explorations, commerce, etc.) that characterize the modern era. Of course, the senses of the mobility in these two patterns are quite different, but both uses express plainly an undeniably, the intrinsic power of the human subject.

At a general, “metaphysical” level I want to mention here only the penetrating work of Peter Sloterdijk dedicated to this topic. In his *Eurotaoismus: Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik*, Sloterdijk highlights what he called “the kinetic model of the modern success”, understood as a movement for a perpetually increasing mobility. He observed further specific phenomena of it in all the areas of human activity: the accumulation of scientific knowledge, the auto-exaltation of the modern territorial state, the dynamics of the military mobilization, the auto-dramatization of the sportive body, the auto-erotization of the sexual subjects, the auto-divinization of the individual as an artist, etc. In his view, for all these phenomena the model – if not the promoter or the “first-mover”, we add – was undoubtedly the economic (intimately conjoined with the industrial and the financial) process (Sloterdijk 1989).

negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. (Appadurai 1996, 31)

A similar view, with an emphasis on mobility in many senses, is transmitted by Nicholas Bourriaud's synthetic depiction (made by Vermeulen and van den Akker) of the conceptualization of (wo)man of nowadays social reality. So, "[t]he altermodernist (artist) is a *homo viator*, liberated from (an obsession with) his/her origins, free to travel and explore, perceiving anew the global landscape and the 'terra incognita' of history." (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2012). Of course, Bourriaud himself speaks for the artist, but the way in which Vermeulen and van den Akker use the brackets shows a very possible – if not desirable – sliding of references. At least, all the features / gestures that accompany him/her could be employed to the purpose of our own portrayal of the today (desired) subjectivity.

As we have already said, we cannot entirely develop here the idea of the model mentioned above and also of what "follows" from it, but we could wonder at least if what is implied is not at all a "real" synthesis expressed through contemporary human subjectivity, but a kind of *transfer* (an illicit one) added to it, on the one hand, from the features of a post-postmodern creative subject²⁶, of an author tailored excessively to the figure of the contemporary "intellectual"; and, on the other hand, from the features of very mobile, middle-class people of Western cultures (always ready-to-go in the race for an appropriate – to their professional acquisitions and investments – position and income), to the political subject in general, wherever he may be.

²⁶ We should stress, as Jameson remarkably pointed out, that besides trying to understand it as a particular cultural style, postmodernism "[i]t is also (...) a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order – what is often euphemistically called modernization, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism." (Jameson 1988, 15). Moreover, "postmodernism replicates or reproduces – reinforces – the logic of consumer capitalism" (Jameson 1988, 29). We find no reason not to extend Jameson's estimation to the post-postmodernism of today as we theorized it in our study, a cultural configuration that is more congenial with tough neo-liberal practices (and thus express them plastically). We could add that this post-postmodern attitude is then more *realist* (and cynical?) about the sense of the game that is played in – or with – our lives. We should notice that this last remark offers as such a kind of a minimal criterion for distinguishing between a postmodern and post-postmodern attitude.

We could bring into discussion, for convincingly exemplifying the above idea, a concept like that of *creative class* forged by Richard Florida, a class understood by him as the dominant one in society (Florida 2002, ix) – of course, in US society. Dominant and... apart also²⁷, because “Creative Class people literally live in a different kind of time from the rest of the nation” (Florida, 2002, 144)²⁸.

Once again, we are facing here a (*very*) *mobile subject*, his identity (in the most complex sense of the notion: professional, psychical, existential, spatial presence, etc.) is a moving one. But we should see that in many cases what is implied here is also a mobility of another kind, not *chosen* (on quasi-artistic grounds) but *imposed* to people. Professionally / economically speaking, “the general shift towards flexible accumulation of capital has led to a growing *requirement* for an increased mobility of labour (our emphasis)” (Rousseau 2012, 125)²⁹. As Max Rousseau convincingly analyzed, the post-Fordist regime “*requires* a flexible core of skilled workers to be mobile at

²⁷ Like all dominant classes in history – and, unfortunately, to no surprise, for this intellectual middle-class also.

²⁸ Chris Lehmann gives a fine description of this new sort of class, observing that “we get in an intellectual world that grows steadily more indifferent to questions of economic fairness and narrowing social opportunity. Its inhabitants find themselves speaking confidently on behalf of recombined new elites and entire economic orders. They are pleased to see their consumer choices ratified by history, and their own taste preferences elevated as models for new networks of production, urban geographies, and, indeed, for the sprawling new complex of global democracy. Their minds race and their hearts beat faster. But they ignore the ground speeding by beneath their feet” (cited in Peck 2005, 745). These people could be called, we add, the “aristocrats of the neo-liberal democracy”. They are not only better adapted to this mobile reality, they also (know to) intensify it.

²⁹ As Mirzoeff stresses, the “modern anti-spectacle now dictates that there is nothing to see and that instead one must keep moving, keep circulating and keep consuming” (cited in Rousseau 2012, 138). Let’s notice – not just in passing – that Mirzoeff was referring here to Jacques Rancière and his work *Au bords du politique*. But, we should add, we have a return of the spectacle, because this moving is itself a spectacle – the *real spectacle* (a necessary oxymoron here) you yourself are playing in: the spectacle of labour, the spectacle of democracy, etc.

In a further sense, even the unchanged, “eternal” cultural or religious traditions, encapsulated in all kind of conserving sites, should be included in a *circuit*: financial, touristic, etc. – should be delivered as such to mobility. The immobility should be inscribed in mobility.

Far from being an option, the mobility is a necessary condition in today society, at least for those who want to receive something from it.

the international scale and an increasing part of the urban population to be mobile at the ‘metropolitan scale’ to work, but also to study and to consume (our emphasis)” (Rousseau 2012, 129)³⁰.

Working, studying, consuming, exhibiting an urban behavior, etc. are all current expressions of a unique, new kind of subject. Neoliberal requirements happily / fortunately meet here postmodernity, at least partly³¹. Probably the best positive example in this case is that of what is called the ‘new middle-class’, consisting – as in Florida’s theorization – of “young, urban, individualistic graduates”. As Rousseau adds, “[o]ne of the most important characteristics of these individuals is precisely spatial mobility, be it as an element of a successful professional career or as an element of a successful holiday – increasingly remote and exotic travel, for example, is much appreciated by this new urban group (our emphasis)” (Rousseau 2012, 133). Naturally, it is not only *spatial* mobility in question here – this one has to be understood also as a *mental (intellectual)* mobility. For some fortunate people the spatial mobility is the effect of this latter achievement, itself acquired through a proper blessed neoliberal education; for many others it is – right the contrary – the baffling cause; liberty and expression of your own desire or will (at least in appearance...), respectively constraint and fulfillment of needs.

The inequalities involved are predictable and also very real, a fact that many easily forget. Placing the discussion on the concrete level of transportation, it should be noticed that, beyond the advertising nimbus created in the area of tourism, trade or even “culture”, “transnational mobility is not assumed to be available to everyone. The cost of mobility excludes the poorest inhabitants of the metropolis from the new opportunities allowed by the development of the new infrastructures of transportation” (Rousseau 2012, 134)³². But, of course, it would

³⁰ A cynical comment should add that through economic impositions of the capital many people find out that they are really mobile.

³¹ “The mobile body celebrated by postmodernity is indifferently that of the businessman in transit, of the young urbanite going to places of consumption in the urban space, and of the low-skilled worker who has to fulfill three different part-time jobs in one week, each situated in different spaces and organized during different times of the day” (Rousseau 2012, 129).

³² Referring to the former working class of textile industry from Roubaix, confined now into several pauperized districts, Rousseau observes that “[t]he fact that they are less mobile than the privileged middle class does not of course mean that the residents of these types of impoverished districts are totally immobile. But the scale of their mobilities (the district, the digital network, and sometimes the former colonies) is definitely not the

be necessary to additionally appeal here to other kind of impediments, also very concrete (lack of education, for example).

Should we not also say that the result is somehow a *manipulation*?³³ And this in the sense of creating the illusion of a power / autonomy that, in fact, the human subjects (for their vast majority) *do not have* (and, again for their vast majority, will probably not *ever* have). Instead of accurately describing a reality, the effect would thereby be to powerfully accelerate the dissolution³⁴ or even the destruction of what is left of previous social relations.

Instead of Conclusions, Some Further Problems

Paradoxically, another important question is whether this model of what might be called a consumptionist-like democracy is really an *individualistic* one as it pretends to be, and this in a *positive* way, i.e. actually functioning in favor of the individual (and without deforming some irreducible individual rights).

Obviously enough (I hope), the hyper-individualist model of the consumerist society is hiding many important problems of the human person. On the one hand, at a certain level³⁵, the man is here by default very collective – we are all meant to form “the consumerist community”. In fact, the consumption has no other sense, a “personal” one – it is not and cannot become “personalized”, despite all sort of assurances that we get through consumption something special for *us*; it is meant to draw in the game more and more people and to create an inter-personal network of consumerist dependencies, operating somehow “alone” or “by itself”, as by an “invisible hand of consumption”. This equates in effect to a mystification: there would be no hyper-individualism here, but an “instrumental” communitarianism based on a permanent calculus that “links” us through satisfying the desires and pursuing the individual interests. This also means an equalization of the behavior, of the ontological figure of

urban/metropolitan scale the elites of Roubaix want them to embrace” (Rousseau 2012, 141, note 2). For these endemic unequal mobilities see also the illuminating *Globalization: The Human Consequences* of Zygmunt Bauman.

³³ Even if it is not “conscious” for many authors.

³⁴ At least on what might be called a “mental” level.

³⁵ I do not call it deep, but only well hidden or dissimulated, because what is at stake here is an exacerbation of human passions – in other words we are with this occasion on the very surface of the being of man.

human being³⁶ – what previously transcended the immediate interests and the further negotiations³⁷, become now negotiable items in a desired global market.

On the other hand, the previous links³⁸ that create a somewhat full community (a durable community, in the sense of a “communion” – the communities of consumerist type being as volatile as the interests and the objects of these interests) are denounced and destroyed by consumerism itself and its associated policies as being not at all “natural” as it is pretended to be or as being obstacles in front of the human freedom to be removed³⁹. A communion in today’s society would be an illusion, both unreasonable and futile.

In fact, and paradoxically, the hyper-individualism does exist well and truly, and at a very deep level. Yet in this case it signifies not a *power* of the human being, but a *loss*, even in a pragmatic sense. It is a manner to be left (almost totally) *lonely* in face of far superior forces⁴⁰, superior even than those previously denounced and eliminated as being harmful and adverse for human liberty. Although, obviously and predictably enough, people will permanently be flattered by addressing them as individuals that have historically evolved, grown up, and who are masters on/of their reason and their power to choose, to be critical, to contest, etc. Most often the claimed force of human individual does not exist, it is just the psychological effect of the manipulative rhetoric of a society that *wants* you powerful, but first and foremost, powerful to consume as much as you can.

Moreover, and even worse, the market/consumerist “pressures” make the men forget that this fight even makes sense, that you could think (and live!) your life somehow transcendently, for a noble (pure, altruistic, etc) purpose⁴¹ – instead, those punctual, “non-metaphysical” fights through which people are entitled to immediately, palpably receive something will be embellished and

³⁶ In a more philosophical way of speaking.

³⁷ The religious, familial, cultural, etc., values, to be more precise.

³⁸ Links like family, religion, education in a (strong) humanist sense, classic culture, classic political participative behavior, even social class or trade unions, etc. – all these are not trendy now...

³⁹ Only consumption is very often presented to be immediate, in other words un-mediated by nothing: in consumption I am “me and myself”, un-adulterated by others; here I can only observe and pursue my “true” interests linked with my body and my soul. Here I am really “I”.

⁴⁰ A good name for the human condition according to the neoliberal & consumerist agenda would be thus *hyper-loneliness*.

⁴¹ As we have already said, obsolete, dusty, naïve words...

publicized. Of course, the point here is not to denounce these fights as such (it would be absurd and also harmful), but only to understand that there are *all kinds of fights*, with variable value and importance – and to also understand that concentrating *only* in empirical, gain-driven fights will produce in the future, with a great probability, a market-driven subject. Precisely here will be situated the core of politics, of the new manner – negative or positive – of doing politics – either in trying to satisfy consumerist type discontents, more or less “collective”, with a strong public recognition; or in wars, probably previously already lost, of (only few, very few) rational solitudes⁴².

*

Another fundamental theoretical problem is that we should ask seriously ourselves (apart from the today’s societal clichés) about the true possibility of a non-mediated human action, about the possibility that a subject has to express himself (his authentic, deepest, true sentiments, or desires, or even “rights”⁴³) directly. Obviously, a recent (overwhelming) reality that put even more acutely this serious problem and raises further questions is that of internet, or what was called the “internet society”.

Generally, we contend that it could be a transparent, undistortionable social medium as such and also that this medium could favor personal expression. The market, the internet⁴⁴, etc. all these mediums are for a great extent economically-driven and withal particular economic-financial strong forces are the vectors of movement and the true beneficiaries / recipients of our participations to them. Of course, we could somehow “amend”⁴⁵ some slippages of the main actors, but they could very well use these reactions for improving their marketing – and political too! – strategies and not for resolving the problems in depth. Moreover, the medium itself is one that contains only partly “true information”. The elements that participate in the market – and the market is now the model for all social mediums – are “originally adulterated” by

⁴² *Indeed* rational and *indeed* solitudes.

⁴³ In the sense of (very) “personal rights”, like the right to happiness.

⁴⁴ It is a good thing that we can speak, for some years already, about *two* realities in these cases. Each of them is a ferment (probably the best possible) for the other one.

⁴⁵ By thoroughly verifying and critically amending the commercial information or by not buying products, etc.

different factors and these factors reflect the normal economic (but also political, artistic, religious, etc.) *interests* of the various actors involved.

The problem here is not to minimize or even to elude certain advantages of some of the mechanisms of the contemporary society, but to also take into consideration the great *dangers* for democracy, that could appear concomitantly, and to seriously object to some too optimistic theorizations of contemporary democracy and also to the widespread figure of an evolution of the political that sees today's "economic democracy" as the totally positive accomplishment of the democracy as such.

We could do this, for instance, pointing critically to a general historical picture as that drawn by Andrew and Nada Korac-Kakabadse (1999). In their view, we should speak about three generic models of democracy: the Aristotelian-style direct democracy implemented in polis, based on orality – the agora as a place for democracy, the range of the human voice limiting democracy's size; the representative (mediated) democracy of the national state, based on bureaucracy and on the party system – the parliament as the place for democracy; and the information technology-facilitated and -mediated "electronic democracy" – computer and web as places of democracy. Of course, for both authors there is a kind of positive evolution in this classification. Representative democracy is almost entirely negatively described – in order to do this, they bring into question almost all the cynical arsenal developed over time against its main institutions (but not even a word about its positive acquirements)⁴⁶. As a conclusion of the authors, a new form of direct democracy may be enabled by information technology (IT).

But, if we look more attentively at this evolution, as simplified as it is, we easily observe that the enlargement of the participatory basis of democracy equates paradoxically to an increasing process of mediation. In other words, democracy is increasingly non-participative from a physical, sensible point of view⁴⁷. A

⁴⁶ Many authors see in the present state of things only the (final) failure of the Western classic democratic institutions and mechanisms, without undergoing any real theoretical attempt to think about their modification or improving. They see the democratic alternative in other areas than the previous ones, areas that privilege a priori the individualistic social frame, like consumption, internet, even (contemporary) art etc.

⁴⁷ And it is quite plausible to think that the process will evolve in the same direction in the future.

democracy performed in front of the computer⁴⁸ is not – not a fortiori and not completely – a concrete democracy (moreover, it could be sometimes a process not at all real), it is an entirely mediated one⁴⁹. We cannot therefore state that through computers we have a more *real* democracy. Paraphrasing, there can be no *Democracy ex machina*. This does not mean to “eliminate” the (use of the) computer from the political process, but simply not to uncritically set here the positive *essence* of the political.

Of course, some theorists will happily assert the opposite, that electronic democracy is implicative, thorough, accurate, verifiable and informed, somehow essentially more “direct” than the former classic representative one – after all we ourselves are surfing the internet, are making value judgments (evaluations) and are taking political decisions imposing us to be the correct ones by continuously comparing and scaling the information received. We are also seeing that somehow our options once expressed receive responses which are taken (palpably, quickly) into account, positively or negatively. But it is equally obvious that the internet is more and more the place of an almighty presence of all sorts of economic, financial, political, etc. distortions and manipulations, of measures of exclusion (of some discourses from the range of the possible ones) and even of verifications by security services, which transform the internet in anything else⁵⁰ but not in a *by itself* transparent and neutral medium that favors – unless an even more consistent *personal* process of attestation of the information involved – a strong political education and a real democratic behavior. Moreover, it might even need an *additional human presence*, in a form of a very concrete *humanist education*, in order to avoid the strong threats against democracy that are present here.

⁴⁸ Of course, not exclusively. The internet would be designated here only as the “source” of the most reliable information.

⁴⁹ This does not mean to “eliminate” the (use of the) computer from the political process, but simply not to uncritically confer it the value of political reality and no wisely to set here the positive *essence* of the political for what happens there.

⁵⁰ For instance, in a pure space of play / game, with its countless and harmless unknowns.

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The Transhumanist Project: Some Questions and a Political Reading*

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Preliminary Theoretical Reflections on Transhumanism

The first use of this concept appears in 1957, when a group of scientists, artists and futurists in the U.S. began organizing what would become the transhumanist movement. Transhumanist thinkers postulate that human beings will be transformed, sooner or later, into beings with expanded skills, so much as to deserve the label of “posthumans”. Transhumanist forecasts about the future profoundly transformed humanity and attracted many supporters and critics of a wide range of perspectives. Transhumanism has been labeled by one of the most vehement opponents as being “the most dangerous idea in the world”, while most ardent supporters defined it as “the movement that is essentializing the most daring, imaginative and idealistic aspirations of humanity”.

In the article “A History of Transhumanist Thought” (2005), transhumanist philosopher Nick Bostrom locates the roots of transhumanism in Renaissance humanism and in that of the Age of Enlightenment. For example, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola would call people to “sculpt their own statue”, René Descartes considered human amelioration one of the fruits of his scientific approach and Marquis de Condorcet speculated on the use of medical science for extending human life. Later in the twentieth century, J.B.S. Haldane, a direct and influential precursor to transhumanist concepts wrote in 1923 in the essay *Daedalus: The Science and the Future* that great benefits would be derived from applications of genetics and other advanced sciences to human biology. Biologist Julian Huxley (Aldous Huxley’s brother, a friend of Haldane) seems to have been the first to use the word “transhumanism” with its actual meaning.

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In 1957 he defined transhumanism as “man remaining man, but transcending himself by realizing new possibilities of his human nature” (Huxley 1957, 13). This definition, however, differs materially from the one in use since the 1980s (the one given above). Computer scientist Marvin Minsky followed, addressing a subject for fiction in the 1960s: the relationship between human intelligence and artificial intelligence. Subsequently the theme was approached by other influential thinkers such as Hans Moravec and Ray Kurzweil, who oscillated between the technical arena and futuristic speculations in the transhumanist style (such as the approaches adopted by the waves of optimistic mentioned above). Coalition and coagulation of the transhumanist movement actually began in the last decades of the 20th century. In 1966, FM-2030 (a nickname used by Fereidoun M. Esfandiary), a futurologist who advocated “the new concepts of mankind” in the New School of New York, began to identify people who adopt technologies, styles and philosophies of transitional life toward “posthumanitarianism” as “transhumans” (short for “transitory human”).

In 1972, Robert Ettinger contributed to the conceptualization of the “transhumanity” in his book *Man into Superman*. Short after this, in 1973, FM-2030 published “Upwingers Manifesto” to stimulate transhumanist activism. The meeting of the first self-declared transhumanists was conducted at the University of California in Los Angeles, which became the main center of transhumanist thought. FM-2030 held there futuristic courses on his ideology, “the third way”. Natasha Vita-More presented *Breaking Away*, her 1980 experimental film on unchaining people from their biological limitations and from the earth’s gravity, on their way into space, and in 1982 she wrote “The Declaration of the Transhumanist Arts”.

Eric Drexler published in 1986 *Engines of creation: the coming age of nanotechnology*, a book that analyzed the possibilities of nanotechnology and molecular assemblers, and founded the Foresight Institute, the first foundation that researched, promoted and conducted cryogenics. In 1988, during the cybercultural ascent, philosopher Max More founded Extropy Institute. In 1990 he founded modern transhumanism, giving a new definition: “Transhumanism is a class of philosophies that seek to urge us towards a posthuman condition. Transhumanism differs from humanism in recognizing and anticipating the radical changes in the nature and the possibilities of future life, resulting from various sciences and technologies”.

In 1998, philosophers Nick Bostrom and David Pearce founded the World Transhumanist Association, WTA, an international non-governmental organization, supported and funded by leading representatives of neoliberalism, whose main goals aimed at recognition of transhumanism as a legitimate subject

of scientific inquiry and public policy. In 1999, the WTA designed and adopted the “Transhumanist Declaration” that presented, among others, two formal definitions for transhumanism, so that in the first instance it would be an intellectual and cultural movement that stated any possible and desirable action for fundamental improvement of the human condition through applied reason, especially through the development and widespread accessibility for technologies to eliminate aging and enhance human intellectual, physical and psychological capabilities. At the same time but on another level, transhumanism is also to study the consequences, the promises and the potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations and the related study of the ethical issues involved or which may arise through the development and use of such technologies.

Without going into further details and definitions, there are nevertheless a number of clarifications on the meaning of a concept borrowed from physics such as singularity, a term inextricably linked to transhumanism.

Technological singularity is a futurology concept that concerns the general implications of the accelerated scientific and technical progress for the human species and what we understand of mankind. In an interview given in 1958, John von Neumann talked about the fact that scientific and technical progress foresees the kind of singularity, beyond which the life and the world that we currently perceive and understand couldn't be the same, on the same parameters and based on the same paradigm. In 1965, I.J. Good introduces the idea of intelligent explosion (of a car) which is now included in the concept of technological singularity. Formally the concept was launched in 1993 by mathematician Vernon Vinge and then developed by experts such as Ray Kurzweill's essay “The Law of Accelerating Returns” (2001). The term was borrowed from physics (for which the singularity can be a black hole or the Big Bang momentum).

Let us briefly recap the main goals of transhumanism, respectively to eliminate aging and increase physical, mental and psychological abilities of man. Beyond the problems of planet overpopulation we are already facing, the elimination of aging would either escalate the already serious problems the whole civilization is dealing on water, food and other resources or it would be reserved for those with a certain financial potential (at least in its first phase) and then we must ask ourselves towards what kind of society are we heading? Let's start briefly by examining some efforts aimed at improving human psychological qualities...

Brief History of “Transdisciplinary” Psychology

Does anyone know what may be inside the human mind? Yes and no... But what if a man were to have convictions that are not consistent with the interests of “society”? Could they be changed and if not, could they be “washed”?

These are questions that arise from concerns of the human species, or at least a part of it, concerns that always end with the most unimaginable suffering, disasters and human dramas. And yet they have not given up – evil knows no rest.

For example, Ms. Gail Kastner, being of old age, was staying at a nursing home in Montreal (somewhere in the early 50s of the last century) due to a huge number of small, very painful column fractures. No, Ms. Gail Kastner didn't practice any performance sport; neck pain and hundreds of microfractures were only one of the “memories” left by the 63 (sixty-three) “sessions” of electric shocks therapy applied to her central brain lobes (at voltages between 150 and 200 volts). These shocks have caused violent convulsions to the old patient, leading to fractures and cracks in the spine, sprains, broken teeth, bleeding gums, etc.

During The Second World War, the Scottish-born American citizen Ewen Cameron was president of the American Psychiatric Association, President of the Canadian Psychiatric Association and president of the World Psychiatric Association; he was also part of a committee of three people (psychiatrists) who participated in a psychiatric evaluation of Rudolf Hess.

Another important character was the “great” psychiatrist Ugo Ceoletti, the inventor of shock therapy, who describes his invention and the source of ideas for this therapy in these approximate terms: I went to the slaughterhouse to witness the so-called “electric cutting” of pigs and we saw there how they applied some metal clips connected to electrical current (125V) to the pig's temples. As soon as the clips were applied the pigs fell down and, in seconds, they were shaken by convulsions, like those of dogs used for experiments. After that, they were stabbed – during epileptic coma – and during seizures that were mentioned above.

The case of the old lady, Gail Kastner, was neither an experiment nor a Nazi abomination like the camps of terrible memory, but an effective treatment applied knowingly, treatment applied after the end of Second World War, a war that the whole of mankind wanted to forget, along with its atrocities. Since 1948, Dr. Cyril J.C. Kennedy and Dr. David Anchel explained the “benefits” of such electroshock treatment: “their minds look like immaculate tablets, on which we can write (...) anything”. In a more plastic expression, after applying such a treatment, anyone can become a kind of “archaeologist” in search of the

past of his own life (it must be said that in the 40s, the electroshocks method was a more and more popular method of therapy applied by psychiatrists in Europe and North America).

For dr. Cameron, “massive loss of memory” is not an unfortunate or a reprehensible side effect, but rather it encapsulated the entire treatment because it was the key to bringing the patient to an early stage of its evolution, “long before the emergence of schizophrenic thinking and behavior”. And Gail Kastner continues and adds: “This is not just about a loss of spatio-temporal image, but the loss of any sensations that might indicate its presence”.

To “dismantle” patients, Dr. Cameron used a device called Page-Russell, which administered up to six consecutive shocks instead of one. Frustrated that their patients still seemed to be able to cling to some “remnants of personality”, world renowned psychiatrists have continued administering the most “daring” amphetamine combinations, tranquilizers and hallucinogens (barbiturates, chlorpromazine, anitol sodium oxide, nitrate, nembutal, torzium, dezoxium, etc.) for the purpose of disorientating and absolutely erasing the patient’s memory.

Full “scraping” of personality was followed by a so-called process of psychic “piloting” – a procedure in which patients were required to listen to pre-recorded messages. After applying shock therapy and after drug administration, being also exhausted and in a quasi-vegetative state, patients could no longer oppose listening to pre-recorded messages for weeks, from 16 to 20 hours a day for over 100 days consecutively. Not long after this episode, C.I.A. suddenly became very interested in the experiments of Dr. Cameron. Why? The answer is to see how such procedures can be useful in special interrogation techniques. After the departure of Cameron, an independent study of the results of his experiments showed that between 75-80% of the “treated” patients at Allan Memorial Institute were in a much worse condition at the end of the procedures compared with their condition on admission.

Let us move on into another area, but not far away from the above conclusions. Also placed in the 50s, while in a process of mythologizing that was carefully and professionally developed and implemented, the department of economics of the University of Chicago was being elevated to the rank of school of thought and the strongest bulwark against Keynesian school and implicitly against the paternalistic and/or the interventionist state (state which had brought the American economy, based on the Keynesian doctrine, out from the worst crisis, the great crisis of 1929-1933).

Frank Knight, one of the founding fathers of economic theories of the School of Chicago (led, as is known, by Milton Friedman), was the promoter of the idea that teachers need to “print”, to “punch” in the minds of their students,

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the belief that the economic theory of the School of Chicago is not a hypothesis under discussion, but a sacred feature, intrinsic to the system, which is a “divine” gift and not an opportunity to remain at the free will of human intelligence and democratic principles. The doctrine was to be accepted as a “paternal figure” (we will return on it in a separate study – it is about the neoliberal doctrine and its control, the shock doctrine, the primary version of the doctrine of chaos).

From psychology to economics and from economics to psychology, Oxford English Dictionary helps us pull together and find a common denominator of everything written above, from the definition of herding behavior that represents a fundamental coordinated behavior of a system or a culture transferred/passed from one individual to another by imitation or other non-genetic means.

New and Old Ideas About Humanity, Transhumanism and War

A report by the Defense Intelligence Agency of the U.S. Department of Defense designated a formidable weapon that will fundamentally redefine future warfare. War will not anymore be waged mainly on the battlefield but directly in the minds of soldiers, based on the background of the latest discoveries in neuroscience and psychopharmacology. Psychologists from the same US army claim that soldiers will soon be able to enter the mind of their enemies to dictate them the immediate actions, which would undoubtedly avoid terrorist attacks and save many lives (after all, is this not the ultimate goal of any war?...).

Functional neuroimaging could be applied for the growth of human performance. Once we understand how the human brain works, we may be able to dictate to it. Robo-soldiers will soon become a reality and the future wars will be fought without unnecessary bloodshed; psychology, medicine and transhumanism have shaken hands long ago and the results begin to appear. Cyborgs are among us, by cyborg understanding a cybernetic organism having both natural and artificial systems, to varying degrees and with different purposes.

Questions like: do we consider a man with a heart implant a cyborg, or one with hearing aid, or one with a cybernetic hand? These are questions for regularly benefiting or humanizing (or retracting) a truth that cannot be hidden, trivialized or humanized.

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Neither cardiac implant nor cyber hand nor hearing aid alienates human emotions, but they can amplify them. Moreover, there are opinions (Amber Case, researcher, anthropologist) which state that all people who are familiar with computers are cyborgs; i.e. the keyboard and screen monitors are actually extensions of human function. Is this a significant aspect of “evolution in action” a sign, an indicator of evolution which is no longer essentially driven by laws of nature but by the laws of science and technology? Without making a semantic analysis we must emphasize, however, certain shades, namely that when we talk about man, his intellectual and spiritual development on the time scale can be addressed by using the word evolution. In relation with technology, it may eventually progress, but under no circumstances evolve. Man evolves and technology progresses. The relationship and dynamics of human evolution and technological progress has placed man repeatedly in an undignified posture for his status of superior being and there are more and more arguments and opinions that, as technology develops, man will regress in the fundamental plans that distinguish him from other beings on this planet. The paces of evolution are not the same with the paces of development. Let us stop here with these emphases, but we will insist that technology can’t be associated in any way to progress, the confusion leading to an amalgamation / mixing of plans, which would not be in support of an objective truth (which is more and more underfunded).

But the transhumanist questions continue. Are we witnessing the emergence of a *Homo sapiens* subspecies? Do we know when a man becomes a cyborg? Do we know though how and how much would a cyborg regain manhood? In addition to cardiac implants there are implants in the brain that allow connection to a computer; if a man has both implants is he a more efficient cyborg than one with only one implant or is he a more efficient man? This question seems to have no clear answer...

Kosta Grammatidis (automation engineer) says: “Cyborg is your grandma with a hearing aid, her replacement hip, and anyone who runs around with one of those Bluetooth in-ear headsets”. It would seem that the famous pirate with a wooden leg and hook for a hand is, actually, a proto-cyborg. George Landow (expert in digital media at Brown University, USA) says: “Humans are and always have been cyborgs” because he considers articulate language as “the most powerful of technologies”. (Both Grammatidis’ and Landow’ quotes can be found in Hsu 2010)

Ted Winkler (professor of music at the same university) suggests that a pianist could also be considered a cyborg by virtue of the close link between man and his instrument (i.e. piano).

The Geostrategic Pulse in the Context of Transhumanism

It is a truism that the deepening and expansion of evil on a global scale has a variety of sources, but basically emanates and proliferates due to the unbearable growth of the gap between the social status of the ruling class (not driving class) and its cultural and spiritual level. Alienation and despair take over growing masses of people, and their thoughts are focusing increasingly on solutions such as “it is all but over”. This happens from the doctrine of the crisis succession to the shock doctrine, and to the doctrine of chaos. And meanwhile, the geostrategic pulse has increasingly arrhythmias, and the implants of any kind seem to lead to anything but stabilization. What are the solutions?

For example, Kevin Warwick, professor of cybernetics at Reading University (USA), implanted in his arm, as is known, a radio frequency ID. As a result, it can turn on the light on the ends of his fingers or can simulate a remote “hug” – obviously, his wife having mounted the same type of ID. Warwick says he does not want to become a robot, but a better person. Here is a solution to combat the evil of the world. The director Rob Spence who is directing his movies using his cybernetic eye is thinking the same; he is called Eyeborg and he has made an extended documentary about cyber implants and augmentation. And for diminishing the evil in the world there was made a number of robots for... honorable casts for human species. For example, the LS3 Big Dog robot is a kind of mutant dog designed to accompany soldiers who need supplies, being able to carry loads up to 180 kg on rough terrain. The robot named SUGV is the size of a briefcase and is a specialized robot used to identify and track specific “human targets” in crowds.

SAND Flea is a robot which, among others, can jump through a window or from a roof (while filming) and then roll on his own wheel system, then being ready to jump again. And there are miniature drones (the size of a mosquito) that are specialized in surveillance and DNA sample collecting.

Obviously, these examples support the view that technological progress drives the evolution of the human species and vice versa.

What is the stated purpose of transhumanism? Let us recall: the ultimate goal of transhumanism is to sustain eternal life. Now we can explain why we need miniature drones that can collect... DNA!? Or should we ask the question of morality, not for all of us (the last thousand years have shown us that it is useless), but for the robots! The thought that in 2012 there were people like Alain Bolton (who supported the creation of a temple for atheists) or that there is the question of robots morality or of genetically modifying viruses and

pre-programming the health of our children, in a time when the world is facing the most terrible crisis in human history of the last 2,000 years is vague frustrating, but it is clear that things are progressing (!?) with an overwhelming speed, and outside any control.

The shock doctrine is in full swing, and Milton Friedman, from where he is, should be in the seventh heaven...!

The principles of economics, of whose mentor he was, included areas that naturally would have to remain outside their influence (but what is natural in today's world?).

Let's go back to what was previously defined as mimetic behavior. Illiteracy and a cleared human spirit are the main ingredients generating such behavior. The inevitability and the universalization of disasters of any kind (from humanitarian crises, war, environmental disasters, epidemics, financial crises) by means that abound, generate another feeling that keeps humanity against the wall: fear. From bread and circus we come to fear and imitation! Progress, no joke! Evolution of maximum conduct and nothing else!

All educational, financial, legal, political and social systems, that any human being should be subject by birth, have one goal: perpetuation of herding behavior. We have reached the point where no matter what nature gives us, for the benefit of all of us, it will remain virtually forever inaccessible. Without going into areas still considered taboo and nonspecific to the current concerns of common man, let's stay a little while in the area of applied neuro-psychiatry.

As is known, the human brain has two hemispheres: the right hemisphere (which functions as the "parallel" nervous system) and left hemisphere (which operates as a "series" system). The right hemisphere integrates us, the left hemisphere separates us. The efforts of the "social builders" are focused on actions ensuring that every individual is stuck in a vision of a world that is consistent to the left hemisphere, ensuring he is disconnected from the reality show and is mimetic coupled to new generation gadgets, coupler which is to render the illusion of satisfaction, of being a winner and that of power. The qualitative germs have been removed from the mimetic behavior, so that it became subject to the reign of quantity. The result? The sharp decline in global IQ, general degradation of the human being amid exacerbation of specific behavioral traits specific for the medium man and at most: pragmatism. Being pragmatic means to know almost everything about almost nothing and do nothing when you promised you'd do it all.

Transhumanism - The Future Geostrategic Vector or the Ecocide Globalist Greed

During several articles I have pointed out and insisted that the future geo-strategies will have as carrying vectors, on the one hand, the vital resources on which the current civilization was built, and on the other hand, the stimulation and exacerbation of ancestral desires and fears that have always haunted mankind (undeniable proof that in fact, whatever the level of civilization to which we relate to in time and globally, humanity is in a continuous and extensive regression, in everything that defines man intrinsically) .

A large-scale movement, although very insidious and silent, is starting in an alert growth to include “high” fields in the world of finance, technology, science and corporations. We are talking about transhumanism, an unimaginable elevation of the human-machine symbiosis. From oil, rare soils and water, etc., the geostrategic “game” extends to the area of mind-control (an area that has been intensively investigated, especially after the Second World War).

Let us first get acquainted with the “Heroes of the Day” in this area that many of us wouldn’t even dare imagine.

Ray Kurzweil, author of several books in the field (including the one entitled *The Singularity is Near*), is a key character in the establishment of the Singularity University and one of the most earnest supporters of transhumanism, a Spiritus Rector of the whole movement. He is one of some who make one of the most convincing demonstrations of the exponential growth of technology, saying that by 2003 humanity had generated 5 Hb (hexa bites), in 2004 the same amount of information being generated in 10 days and in 2013, the same 5 Hb were produced in just 10 minutes.

Peter Diamandis, professor at Singularity University, “presents” himself through statements such as:

We will eventually become an interconnection of the entire human race; and we will become God-like... plugging your brain into Google... omnipresent... being able to know the thoughts of someone in Japan or Hawaii, or wherever it might be, at any time. When I stop and I think about that, once you plug into that global network, and you know the thoughts and feelings of millions or billions of people... to unplug yourself will be so lonely. (Ptolemy 2009)

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So, we will all be gods! All of us! So who will represent the angels? Probably the normal people who do not want at any cost to connect their brains to Google, the “misfits”, those who are refractory to the new, those who reject transhumanism! I think that, rather than being God made by man, it’s better to remain an angel or man made by God! Let’s continue with the presentations...

James Hughes, businessman (Hartford, Connecticut) and founder of the global network for transhumanists (WTA) said the following in a televised interview: “There are transhumanists worldwide. But if we were to put a magnifying glass on Silicon Valley (California), there, almost all of the transhumanists are anarchic-capitalists, libertarians, in the political sense. They had and still have a disproportionate influence on transhumanist thinking even from the beginning”.

According to the sociologist Jean Claude Guillebaud, when we look closely to what is happening in the USA, we realize that the connections of these technical and scientific projects with the right wing of American liberalism are significant. The right wing has subsidized the Singularity University. We are talking about the radical right liberals, the libertarians. For some people the connection with a certain economic project and its logic is undeniable and even frightening.

Shall we be omnipotent? How many of us, who among us and why? Controlling an object at the other end of the world... sounds good! What kind of object? Whose? And why? But what if somewhere, from within an office, we will be suddenly disconnected without any warning or preparation from the “brain”, and we won’t be able to control even ourselves, let alone any “object at the other end of the world”?

Will we be omnipresent? Shall we be able to read the thoughts of someone in Japan? Will this be possible at any given time? Why? And whose thoughts? Will we all work for secret services? Who will use this ubiquity and for what purposes? Will it be used for controlling “the rest of the world”, the normal people, or the underground world? Will we be a “quiet” mass, will we instantly “fall asleep” in subways, airplanes, trains, etc?

There was a time, in remote antiquity, when politicians and military commanders were the first who “enjoyed” the product of their policies and actions, in that they were the ones who stood at the head of their armies on the battlefield. If evident in other ways, the politicians, corporatists and militarists where to be the first to “benefit” from the undesirable effects of their decisions, how would the world look like? (This hypothesis seems implausible, but who knows...)

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We will also have to deal with a religious replacement issue that we cannot neglect, even if the phenomenon is presented to us as anything other than a religion. Physicist Jean Paul Malrien, Research Manager at CNRS (the most representative research institute specializing in robotics and information theory in France) claimed that

(...) transhumanism is presented as a natural result, a natural extension of the evolution of science and technology. The access to such technologies, whether restricted or generalized, does not lead towards the common good, and seems to be a project for the elite. This would mean the operation of a violent fracture in humanity, which raises a political issue. These people (who support transhumanism) would be ready to push much of humanity overboard, waiting for its final disappearance. They do not need to exterminate them directly; many will disappear because they are weak... (Barrel 2012)

Are we witnessing an update of the “final solution” hidden through the Nazi chancery offices? However, let us keep in mind that the transhumanists gave to man one of the most “synthetic” definitions which, in their view, is a protein-based computer (short and comprehensive).

Let us therefore prepare to welcome a world of machines with human debris. And let us not forget that by 2050-2060 there will be lesser people than robots. From the transhumanist perspective, the tree of life is being redesigned, no longer evolving by selection but by human will! The start for synthetic biology was given a few decades ago... man will become obsolete from birth.

Jaron Lanier (University of Berkeley, California), the inventor of the concept of virtual reality, who was hired in Silicon Valley, comments with terrible disappointment: “Silicon Valley has changed, it was a place where we used to create technology for people, but now it has become a kind of power center, and that bothers me. Google is researching molecular biology and genetics. It’s about the belief that systems and analysis will improve human life...”

Let us emphasize one “insignificant” aspect. The Singularity University headquarters, the headquarters of Google and that of NASA are in the same urban area.

Jacques Testard, biologist and former director of INSERM, expressed the following concern about transhumanism:

It's still amazing to think that the argument that we're behind Japan, USA or others, is enough to give a sense to a project. That means that we will be behind them when we will head into the wall. We are in a period in which we need not go further, but we need to find the means to survive as we are now. I believe that human augmentation is an outrageous speech! (Barrel 2012)

Roland Gori, a reputed sociology professor, expressed a political doubt regarding the new hegemony of scientists seeking for the perfect man:

We must give up the idea of letting experts guide our lives. We need to retake the freedom and democracy that we have abandoned for the benefit and the pressure of security policies and different interests and industries. (Barrel 2012)

These would be some of the most representative exponents and connoisseurs of this field of transhumanism.

Some Conclusions

After mimicry, the next step for the “progress” of human civilization would be transhumanism. A concept still rarely used in public discourse and still absent from the field of common human concerns (though you shouldn't), transhumanism (denoted by H+ or >H) is an intellectual movement and culture that supports the use of new science and technology to improve skills and mental and physical abilities of people and improve what are considered to be undesirable aspects, such as mental retardation, illness, suffering, aging and involuntary death. Is there any truth in this definition? Sir Arthur C. Doyle said once: “when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth”. Should we believe that this is the case?

Everybody wants improving mental and physical abilities. At the end of 20th century, Bill Clinton said that “the weakness of the U.S. Army is the soldier – a tired, suffering, who is afraid, hungry, thirsty soldier...”

Transhumanism, as already intuited, comes to “cleanse” among others, the U.S. military of its possible weaknesses; could we ask ourselves if, at a certain point of the future, transhumanism will come to cleanse mankind of all specifically human experience: joy, happiness, sadness, love, hate. The great defender of transhumanism, Diamandis, as we remember, said: “(...) whoever

opposes process will oppose progress and will implicitly fade away”. Mimicry and the educational system now enter “automatically” into operation so that more and more environments, not seeing the profound reality, mimetically agree and blindly embrace transhumanism. Statistics show that millions of children go to the doctor saying: I feel nothing, I’m no longer human. “Raw material” for the transhumanist world of tomorrow is being prepared early all over the world. Maybe Diamandis is too self-confident. Let us remind him that, under the same omniscient certainty, Lord Kelvin said in 1900, along with many of his colleagues, that “there are no new laws of physics”. Self-sufficiency, be it noble, pushes inexorably to error and to the appearance of waves of optimists, partly trained and fully indoctrinated, that premonitory invite us to expect: human fascination towards dystopia, singularity, adulthood, social hedonism, interconnectivity, noosphere, peak oil, transhumanism, etc.

Since hazards and possible benefits of new technologies (more “powerful” even than those who have made them) could radically change the conditions of human life, they are at least as well studied and analyzed by transhumanists (and not only). That is why brief information on the history of these concerns would be welcome for all who wish to contribute, to become familiar with the new concepts and theoretical elaborations advocated by transhumanism.

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Redefining Politics – Violence and Fear in Contemporary Society*

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A Preliminary Overview

Violence, as a political weapon, is an efficient tool. Its lethal effects have been felt by past generations, as well as present-day populations and, probably, future generations. History has proven that violence has a large range of manifestations: it can oppress a nation or a continent, it can give rise to ideologies or particular ideas; it can bring salvation, or it can manifest as a form of survival. Nevertheless, the first thing one has in mind when thinking about violence is its negative use. A multitude of examples are available, as historical views of the past frequently forgive violence, emphasizing the simple nature of human judgment, often justified by a constantly peripheral narrow-mindedness, which inclines toward brutality and barbarity. Violent movements have always been resorted to, in order to impose certain regimes, forms of government, symbols, religions or characters that subsequently became historical personalities. Violence gave birth to historical monsters, crushing the dignity of humankind, and manifesting itself in propaganda, language, gestures, and attitudes (Volpato 2011).

Violence built fortresses, confined lands, built nations, cowed peoples, and took over human reasoning, by brutally shaping ideas; and it constantly threatened the instinct of freedom. Up to the emergence of the first democracies, the longevity of all forms of government was based on various types of violence, as a means of tempering barbarity and imposing sovereignty. The Roman Empire justified its barbaric acts as ways of redeeming nomadic peoples by opening their path toward civilization and, lately, imposing Christianity through crusades. In exchange, history forgave the Romans' cruelty; it praised it

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for what it offered to Europe, when in fact Europe created the history of the Roman Empire as a means of oppressing peoples. In most cases, violent movements had a specific purpose. If violence had not been effective, it would not have been used as a weapon for political propaganda.

Dictatorships were the forms of government that resorted most often to violence and terror. This is the only explanation for the longevity of dictatorships. Violence can impose a form of government, a state, a political class, symbols, and ideas, because violence transforms the voice of the people into an obedient silence. The purpose of violence has mainly been intimidation, with the objective of oppressing freedom of thought. It is intended as a counterweight to those who make a stand against the regime, gaining its own, seemingly unstoppable, momentum.

Is violence an act of terrorism? For violence to become terrorism, it has to be of a political nature; this is the most plausible answer (Olteanu 2008). Repudiation of violence must be absolute, as it threatens the physical integrity of each human being. Dignity and all the intangible rights that ensure people's legal protection and guarantees of freedom are endangered by violence. It endangers the environment, and affects the exercise of power at state, economic, social, and cultural levels. How legitimate is it to respond to violence with violence? When constitutional instruments cannot fulfill their duty, when the law is enforced only in order to perpetuate violence, which can compromise the physical integrity and the dignity of any human being, even by abolishing intangible rights, the possibility to ensure legal guarantees will no longer exist.

For more than two centuries constitutionalism has been fighting against power, irrespective of its form, as a means of ensuring the legitimate and legal use of power by its holders. The imposition of legitimacy on those in power is an accomplishment of civilization. The different affiliations, sources, and derivations of non-legitimate power have been, from the beginning, overturned through the formation of the state.

We base ourselves upon a utopian, mythical, and hard-fought constitutional triumph. If used frequently, it becomes effective and, if applied, it comes to the support of oppressed and marginalized people who live in precarious conditions in order to satisfy their life and labor needs, for their dignity and future. From a historical viewpoint, violence was, is, and will be used as the weapon of power.

Violence is a small-minded reaction against freedom of thought and encompasses any type of abuse of power and control (Ruggiero 2006, 34). Unfortunately, democratic institutions are like fortresses; they can only resist if the garrison is efficient: in our case, if the garrison consists of governors and

governees. The governors should apply responsible politics accompanied by distributive and applied justice, which should eliminate even the smallest form of violence, because violence will never produce justice. It is just an illusion. It aims at eliminating constitutional authority, and it will always find the opportunity and the decisive moment in order to manifest itself.

Constitutional regimes are the least permissive toward violence, at least in theory. On the other side, there are also those unconstitutional, abusive, and totalitarian regimes that shape violence as a political weapon (Cecchini 1994, 56). Even if, in a democracy, the political use of violence outside the state is usually condemned, certain periods (e.g. resistance in the face of Nazi occupation) or certain social groups (e.g. the proletariat in the beginning of the 20st century) created theories of violence, justified through the greatness or emergency of the case to be defended.

Throughout history, some of the greatest atrocities have been committed in the name of accomplishing the greater good, and most of these, which were contemporary with the events that preceded the complete manifestation of evil, were undertaken with no understanding of how serious (and irreversible) the circumstances of an apparently benign political decision would be in time. In such cases, we deal with failures of reasoning, determined either by a real incapacity to correctly understand the immediate reality, or, in other situations, by voluntary blindness. In *Human Condition* (1958) Hannah Arendt formulated an idea, subsequently reiterated in the *Spirit's Life* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem: Report upon evil's banality* (1963): thus, in her opinion, the source of evil must be sought for in the failure to think. But here we do not deal with the definition of evil as a function of stupidity, considering that those with the greatest responsibility for atrocious crimes against humanity cannot be accused of stupidity (within the current meaning of the term), but rather of an inappropriateness in thinking about reality, of a de-humanization of thought that reduces material beings to abstract and inert figures.

The major political events with maximum levels of violence, both historical and present (those that accompanied the fall of communism, such as the Romanian Revolution of 1989 and the Yugoslavian wars, or those related to the removal of terrorism, dictatorship, and totalitarianism and the passage to a democratic life, such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya) are capable of bringing to public attention and specialist debate some major issues that renew interest in more complex interdisciplinary approaches and analyses of political life. These also include the relationship between political power and violence: the need to find an answer to

questions such as: what is political power and why is it frequently associated with authority, evil, fear, and violence? What is the role of political power and how does it manifest itself? Can political power be reduced to violence and fear? Is fear a political weapon?

Political Power and the Institution of Violence

As a way of “being” and “acting”, political power represents the capacity of groups of people to impose their will in the global organization and management of society. The power is expressed through decisions, as well as through other political phenomena and relations manifested at different social, economic, and organizational levels. According to Alvin Toffler, to study power means to consider at least three of its hypotheses:

1. Power is inherent to all social systems and in all human relationships. It is not a thing but an aspect of any and all relationships among people. Hence it is inescapable and neutral, intrinsically neither good nor bad;
2. The “power system” includes everyone – no one is free of it. But one person’s power loss is not always another’s gain.
3. The power system in any society is subdivided into smaller and smaller power subsystems nested within one another. Feedback links these subsystems to one another, and to the larger systems of which they are part. Individuals are embedded in many different, trough related, power subsystems. (Toffler 1991, 471)

Therefore, political power cannot be limited to a single phenomenon, nor can it be considered as an indivisible whole, but as a structured complex, under the form of a system of powers. Political power always concerns the collective action of a social community and is confined within a certain territory. It is manifested in the places where society becomes layered, asymmetrical, and tensioned, where the social relations system becomes more and more complicated, requiring an instrument for supporting order and rational organization (management, administration, and control).

Subsequently, political power is not a thing, but a *relationship* that operates at all society’s levels, not only at the level of the power apparatus and within which, as shown by Michel Foucault, “a conflict” exists (Foucault 1997). As well as politics, whose expression it is, power is exercised within opposite interests and forces. It is not only repressive, but also productive. Power can

manifest as domination or resistance, but essentially it is a neutral complex of actions and reactions. But the common viewpoint is that power represents only a domination effort, imposing and exercising force, always in relation to certain *interests*, but also represents management, organization, operation, social development, and so on. In other words, political power “*is at the same time society's self-representation as well as one of its institutions*” and appears as “*the indicator of an organic division of the society*” (Boudouin 2007, 17).

In essence, the role of every form of power is that of

ensuring – in accordance with the interests of the social categories that hold the power and exercise it – the cohesion and functionality of different structures and bodies of human society, the coordination of the activities that unfold within it. (Mitran 2006, 68)

All societies need orientation (coordination) toward certain purposes, with power having the function of accomplishing it and maintaining the operation of society. At the same time, political competition between individuals and social groups (parties) may generate instability, with power being the means by which to “monitor” social equilibrium and the established order. Each political structure (especially the state) enters into a relationship with the others and power operates in order to defend national interests, to develop economic, political, cultural relationships, and so on.

Foucault underlines that it is necessary “to distinguish between the power relations understood as strategic games, between liberties and the domination positions that people usually call ‘power’. They include the government technologies through which domination positions emerge and are maintained.” That is why the analysis of political power must take place at three levels: strategic relations, government techniques, and domination positions. Ignoring or mistaking such analysis levels always leads to the association, or even identification, of political power with force, violence, domination, and authority, as psychological, sociological, teleological, and instrumental products are given to political power.

One of the most important manifestations of political are *political regimes*, which express the concrete means for the constitution of management bodies and instruments within society in relation to citizens. It is known that the diversity of the constitution and evolution of political regimes is closely connected to the way in which power is taken over and exercised through democratic or non-democratic means, as certain social, economic, cultural, and

religious factors or historical traditions generated or stimulated one type of political regime or another (democratic, authoritative, totalitarian). The viable criteria for the assessment of a political regime are, therefore, *its nature and means of operation* (democratic or dictatorial), *the values it promotes, the efficiency of the government process, and so on*.

According to Michel Foucault, power may be exercised with a clear political dimension only in democratic regimes, where the members of society are free citizens treated “as subjects that act” (Foucault 1982, 208). In the absence of a certain degree of freedom, power would be pure domination. Under these circumstances, the political power would no longer identify with violence, constriction, and domination, as the power would co-exist with the possibility of non-violent adverse reaction and resistance of citizens to its exertion. The mechanism of democratic life, the operation of the law system, the extension of the public space, and the coincidence of civil society's interests with the state's interests confer power to the legitimate, authoritative political power and its capacity to impose itself. “Thus, violence remains a *simple* (highlighted by us) component of power, constantly reasserted through multiple events of the daily life” (Teodorescu 2000, 23).

By contrast, in totalitarian, communist or dictatorial regimes political power is manifested fraudulently, as an *absolute power*, unrestricted by constitutive laws, untouched by any rules and grounded solely on force and violence. This is possible because totalitarian societies emerge under social destructuring conditions, with the dispersal of collective action and public space disintegration, which leads to inaction and failure of the communal political universe (Bondor 2011). This also explains the longevity of some totalitarian and dictatorial regimes. Under such a reality, total domination through means external to politics may be exerted; turning the state into an instrument for this produces violence and terror, and turns violence into a political weapon. Any reaction or resistance to the regime is easily repressed with brutality.

The consequence of using violence as a political weapon is the institution in society of an *impersonal* violence, spread in all the levels of the society. This is what the Swedish politologist Johan Galtung called “structural violence”, which expressed the effects of society's defective composition, underdevelopment, and poverty, as well as the violation of any rights and liberties of citizens; the brutalization of personal and collective life. Such violence simmers and grows, and, without the presence of a calming alternative, it may explode at any point in uncontrollable forms.

It is a known theoretical principle that political power is not a purpose in itself, but a means to achieving a purpose. And if a purpose justifies the means,

reciprocally, those means are entitled to support that purpose with its most appropriate instruments, including by using force and violence as political weapons.

Political power is accompanied by various manifestations and violent phenomena, which take different forms, irrespective of the type of government or political regime. And this especially takes place through the means of exercising and using government instruments. The social relations between governors–governees, dominator–dominees, order–control, and so on, are seen by people as types of aggression and violence. Thus, we may look at power as a tool for manifesting violence, because political power cannot be accomplished through one's own will, but through domination, force, persuasion, manipulation, demagoguery, and political games.

Even in a democratic society the use of power is exercised through instruments of pressure, through official institutions, and political violence is used in prevention and coercion measures made official through constitutive laws. Political power emerges as a qualified force, *institutionalized*, a kind of “legal violence” and rational action exercised through the state’s instruments. According to Weber (1996) the fundamental instrument of politics is the use of violence. The specific means of *legitimate violence per se* in the hands of human associations is what gives all the ethical problems of politics their idiosyncratic character. The one who makes a pact by virtue of violence is at the mercy of its consequences.

That is why the instrumental vision of power, supported by Max Weber, was adopted by more and more theoreticians of the political phenomenon who “recognize that violence is nothing more than the most obvious manifestation of power” (Mills 1970, 170).

Political theory is mainly preoccupied with the phenomenon of powers (states) using organized violence or that of violent rebellion against power (Miller 2000). Hannah Arendt stated that we have to

decide whether and in what sense “power” can be distinguished from ‘force’, to ascertain how the fact of using force according to law changes the quality of force itself and present us with an entirely different picture of human relations, since ‘force’ by the very fact of being qualified, ceases to be force. (Arendt 1976, 141)

The distinctions made between state-organized violence, characterized as *force*, in contrast to political violence against the state are often meant to justify some acts and condemn others: force is legitimate, but violence is not.

Within the tradition of western political thought, violence is regarded as an undesirable means, but it is sometimes considered necessary in order to reach political objectives. David Miller underlined the necessity for a minimum of violence on behalf of the state, which has an ordering and organizing role in society, “but only in the context of legality and of a regime supported by the majority” (Miller 2000, 643). As power always requires instruments, its exercise is inseparable from the complex of means and purposes that should be subjected to unification and concordance. If the means used by those in power tend to deflect the citizen's public interest toward the satisfaction of their private or their group/party's interest, their exercise has violent consequences and warped social effects.

European researchers have recently paid more and more attention to the issue of social movements, and this area forms the subject of several works, debates, and international scientific conferences (Mitu 2011). Some theoreticians consider that collective violence is an irrational phenomenon having destructive consequences for social order. Nevertheless, other theoreticians (Vilfredo Pareto, Georges Sorel, and Frantz Fanon) give collective violence a positive touch, imbuing it with the capacity to raise questions for the political elite. The latter view is forced to admit that part of the old social norms are no longer operating and must be adapted and reformed. It is a fact that collective violence represents a phenomenon that is common to all societies and is also a feature of contemporary society, sometimes even shaking governments that seem powerful. It is manifested as a rational phenomenon, as long as it remains under the control of those that must ensure its management. Otherwise, collective violence becomes an irrational, destructive phenomenon.

Rationalization of collective violence means, in fact, its institutionalization. In the modern democracy, collective violence is exerted at the level of politics, considering that, through representative regimes, the masses assume certain rights, roles, and actions that used to belong only to elites. It is known that the basic principle in representative democracy is that people lead those that govern, rather than the reverse. As Gustave Le Bon appreciates in his famous work *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* that social behavior is an integral part of the cultural and social change process and we must recognize its positive function, which determines the stability of society and assumes the role of invigorating social order.

Examples of violence institutionalized as a result of the policies applied or rebellion against such policies are numerous and they cause reactions because they are visible. Nevertheless, there are also other types of political violence, even more numerous, but which are often ignored as they are invisible actions,

although they have a major effect in the short term. This relates to symbolic violence through which the aggressive reaction of power is replaced with functional cultural equivalents. Political violence can take the form of invisible symbolic violence, at any time that open brutal violence is impossible and socially condemned.

Ștefan Stănciugelu argues that the social world functions “as a power relations system and, at the same time, as a symbolic system” (Stănciugelu 1998). In other words, struggles for power are also fought in society at a symbolic level and comprise the tendency to bring together symbolic assets that are appreciated as distinctive signs at the level of the social ensemble. Violence represents a common point for all societies, as conflict stands at the origin of politics and of political life. All societies run away from conflict and violence; nevertheless, as shown by Phillipe Braud, “conflict is a positive phenomenon, provided that the costs be contained and the possible slips be controlled” (Braud 1998, 113).

The violent potential and probability of conflicts occurring with consequences of political change are connected to the way in which political systems make resources for the settlement of conflictual situations available to people. This type of symbolic violence is found both in totalitarian and democratic systems. Symbolic violence excludes “competition between symbolic capitals whose accreditation and operation would lead to a threat upon the system of symbols and values of the dominant group.” In contrast to totalitarian political regimes, in democracies symbolic violence is founded on the “democratic principle of periodic elections in a ritualised social behaviour” (Jeffrey 1998, 87).

Based on this principle, as well as on new communication technologies and the transformation of the public area into a tabloid, democratic regimes manage to substitute dangerous real conflicts with ritualized and coded conflicts, which relate to the symbolic dimension of violence. The governors of Ancient Rome understood that “bread and circus” may orientate collective aggressiveness toward an entity different from their own governors. The bloody shows performed by gladiators, by the beasts that tore into Rome's “enemies” had the role of transfiguring the population's violent impulses and thus keeping them under control.

Symbolic violence is more effective than coercion in the field of politics and belongs to any power that imposes as legitimate a series of symbols and significations, simulating real conflicts, in order to succeed in managing collective violence and emotions. In the fight for power, for the keeping and

exercising of it, politicians get involved in increasingly subtle and varied manipulation projects. According to Stănciungelu

Despite all protests, this seductive behaviour of the elites is a democratic one, belonging to pluralist societies. It is part of the “game” and it is accepted as such, becoming a normal element of our lifestyle. “This political “game” is “bad””, but it became necessary. (Stănciungelu 1998, 94)

In the current century, this type of violence has started to dominate and be offered legitimacy, especially as a result of the mass media. As a result of politicians' behavior lacking credibility and due to certain media evolutions (the emergence of star journalism and the competition for audiences, etc.), media output centered on negative and conflictual news, on various dramatic incidents (violence, crime, accidents, catastrophes, etc.) is manifested with varying degrees of intensity from one country to another, in paparazzi-type narratives or reality shows. This phenomenon is known as “videomalaise,” “critical journalism,” or “popular journalism,” which, according to Camelia Beciu, “is not based on sources, on investigation and arguments, but on a series of journalistic strategies designed to maintain the controversy and conflict at any cost, it strongly erodes the public trust in the political structures, generating indifference, frustration, cynicism, anguish, doubt, apathy and absenteeism” (Beciu 2009, 53).

Another form of symbolic violence is the spreading of political myths, which can be connected to the magic of language and of rituals (which cause emotions and strong collective impulses). The modern reinterpretations of myths (Savior's myth, Conspiracy Myth, Golden Age myth, or the ideal society) are expressions of collective desires that cannot be fulfilled through rational solutions. Nevertheless, even though it is a legend, political myth also exercises “an explanatory function”, providing a certain number of keys for the construal of the present, forming a grid that seems to put in order the tormenting chaos of the facts and events.”

Raoul Girardet sees myths as “screens on which collective anguishes are displayed,” ways of reacting in the face of tensions and crises within society. Apart from the explanatory role, myth is “doubled by a mobilising role, through everything it spreads with farsighted dimension, it holds an important role in the origin of crusades or of revolutions” (Girardet 1990, 102).

When Does Fear Become a Political Weapon?

Political fear describes the fear lived by people in the face of a threat upon their collective well-being, such as fear of terrorism, concerns about criminality, anxiety in relation to moral decay, or intimidation exercised against people by governments or groups. What confers to both types of fear a political feature is that they emerge from society or have consequences upon society. Personal fears, such as fear of flying, are artifacts of our own psychologies or experiences and have a low impact on others. By contrast, political fear occurs as a consequence of conflicts between and within societies. Political fear can have extended repercussions. It can dictate public policies, bring new groups to power and may limit the access of others; it can create as well as abrogate laws. The fear of communism in the first years of the Cold War, for instance, caused the withdrawal of the New Deal reforms. Black people's fear of white people's domination and white people's fear of a black rebellion represented the basis of legal segregation in the twentieth century. Political fear is often associated with acts of government, but they are not necessary at any cost, at least not obviously. Let us think about a woman's fear of her abusive husband or a laborer's fear of his/her employer who treats him/her wrongfully. To a superficial observer, these fears are personal, the product of an unfortunate situation, but fully private in power relations. In reality, they are political fears. They emerge from extended social inequities and they feed long traditions of domination of women and laborers. These inequities and traditions are often consolidated, as indirectly as possible, and created, as covertly as possible, by governmental policies. Behind the husband's abuse against the wife there are whole centuries of laws and doctrines that confer him with a certain authority over her; behind the employer's cruelty there are past and current statutes that give the employer coercive power toward its employees.

Although political fear is related to a policy, we often ignore it or misrepresent it, making it difficult to understand the methods by which fear is used and the motivations for it. Seeing political fear as a grounding for public life, people refuse to see the controversies and suffering behind it. Fear seldom gives rise, in the long term, to the unity and energy that many hope to obtain from it. Maybe we should look for these assets in other places and approach fear as what it is – a symptom of generalized conflict and political unhappiness.

For political fear to stimulate the masses, the object of fear should belong to the political territory and, to a certain extent, detach from it in the mind of the scared person. For fear to bring the individual onto the side of

political values, such as the rule of law or liberal democracy, it is necessary to face a political threat against such values.

Collective liability is a vague concept, and its excessive use, in order to mask the refusal to identify personal liabilities and guilt, creates and perpetuates moral and political crisis. A vicious political climate generates a corrupt political system, which uses instruments of fear and economic insecurity. In order to grant access to resources and perpetuate control upon them, the representatives of the party holding power repeatedly announce the imminence of dangers that threaten social order and the common well-being. Governors exploit fear of change, fear of the unknown, and fear of freedom – felt by most people as a burden, because freedom involves the assumption of liability for one's own decisions. This derivative “second degree fear,” remnant of a past but unforgotten experience, is seen by Zygmunt Bauman as one of the main factors that influence human behavior. Amplifying the feeling of social insecurity and personal vulnerability, fear reduces, when it does not suspend it entirely, self-esteem and inhibits any attempted protest against the system. “Fear and evil are Siamese brothers”, Bauman writes in *Liquid Fear*, one of the most striking analyses of the contemporary world's anxieties. The problem of evil in the world is a moral problem, which cannot be dissociated from the problem of personal liability, given that our capacity to recognize evil is inevitably limited. The difficulty of defining evil is amplified by the necessity to distinguish between intentions and consequences: how is it possible that, even though the intentions we act on are good, the consequences of our actions are disastrous? One of the main arguments of Eichmann's defense was that Eichmann did not intend to do harm; he only fulfilled his work duties. By rejecting the assumption of the consequences caused by the performed actions, the bureaucratic mentality places the problem of evil exclusively at the level of intentions, thus cancelling personal liability. The perfect bureaucrat, who executes orders without questioning the appropriateness of an action and its consequences, acts by virtue of an ethics of conviction, which cannot exempt him/her from liability.

Political fear can act in one of the following ways. The leaders or militants can define what is or should be the main object of public fear. This type of political fear uses in almost any situation a real threat that is often created out of nothing. Politicians decide which threats are worth political attention and which do not deserve it. They are the ones who identify a threat upon the population's way of life, the ones who interpret the nature and sources of threat and they propose a confrontation method. They are also the ones that make specific fears subjects of civil debates and public mobilization. This does not mean that each member of the public is really afraid of the chosen object; it

only means that the object dominates the political agenda, removing other possible objects of fear.

The second way in which political fear may occur emerges from the economic, political, and social hierarchies that divide people. This fear is also created, used, or handled by political leaders, but its specific function or purpose is internal intimidation; the use of sanctions, or threat to sanction, so that a group should keep or increase its power. While the first means involves a collective fear of objects or distant dangers, such as a foreign enemy, separate from the collective, this second means of political fear is closer to home and less based on an imagined threat, emerging from conflicts and endemic vertical cracks in society (Bayley 1997, 22).

Nevertheless, the most outstanding political fear is that which structures our lives and limits our possibilities in the most expansive way. It is the fear lived by the less strong in relation to the strong, be they state officials or private employers, far-away governors or local military elites. Even if today we talk about the fear of terrorism, or, in the past, of communism, the most important form of fear is that of regular citizens in relation to their superiors, which sustains the inequities of daily life and takes advantage of them. This type of fear is repressive, restrictive upon the actions of those with less power, and instrumental for the actions of those that are stronger. It ensures the submission of the less strong to the expressed or implicit desires of their superiors, or simply ensures that the first would not do anything to question or impair the current distribution of power. Such fears are essential for those holding power, helping them to follow their agenda with a freer hand, ensuring the maintenance of their positions for longer.

Brief Conclusions

Politics, political power, conflict, fear, and violence form essential coordinates of society and political life. *Conflict* and *violence* accompany *political power*; nevertheless, through a public dialogue, through the noisy conversation that society has with itself; it produces and manages its own interests, problems, and ideals. All these are reflected through the actions of the political actors who provide us with a sublime show, meant to reduce social aggressiveness, to guarantee the reproduction of the political system and ensure social order and peace.

In the era of liberalism's triumph against communism and of international terrorism, when the state is praised as a minimum solution to

anarchy and disorder and when the market replaces politics in the human progress vector role, it is much simpler to believe in cruelty and fear than in freedom and equality. Nevertheless, it is precisely the values of equality and freedom that inspire and animate us in the fight against fear. In other words, fear is not essential. It forms an obstacle and a test, but under no circumstances can it serve as a political necessity. For all those who believe that freedom and equality are real founding principles, the fight against fear is vital, because wherever such principles are broken, the real cause is fear.

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II. Democracy in a Digitalized World

Network Communication and Social Capital for Social Change.

Exploring Communicative Social Capital in the Network Society*

Anabella-Maria Târnovan

Introduction

In the last two decades it has become common knowledge that two major entangled phenomena – globalization and the development of information communication technologies (ICT) – have set the scene for fundamental societal transformations. Naturally, both practitioners and scholars have directed significant efforts in making sense of the logic of the new social organization and of the social changes underlying the new emerging structures. So far, along this arduous journey, the relationship between technology, communication, society, social change and social development has known many different frames and interpretations, some of them technologically deterministic while others rather socially driven. Either way, there seems to be a consensus that ever since Sir Berners-Lee launch of the World Wide Web (www), Internet, communication networks and more recently social media have become integral parts of our everyday life and have significantly influenced social organization, social change and development. Several scholars (Bell 1976; de Sola Pool 1983; Castells 2001; 2004; Bakardjieva 2005) amongst whom perhaps the most prominent is Manuel Castells, place communication and its transformative power at the heart of every aspect of societal reconfiguration and social change. Yet, while both scholars and practitioners recognize that communication has become central for all societal processes, it remains unclear how exactly communication affects society and its development. The issue at stake becomes

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thus to understand the concrete implications and the role played by Internet and communication in social change and development in a society constructed around communication networks.

While the digital revolution and globalization were progressively transforming society bringing along a promise of development, well-known critical social problems – such as poverty, corruption, criminality, health issues, etc – never ceased to affect society at large scale. In fact, some scholars (Fuchs 2009; White *et al.* 2011; Yu 2011) argue that the development of information communication technologies have caused a new array of problems rooted in the inequality of access to resources as result of the global digital divide. In other words, while the rich continue to grow richer, the poor continue to grow poorer. In search of solutions to such challenges in a “moment of unprecedented complexity” (Taylor 2011, 3), scholars have directed their attention towards social capital, a young but promising concept for social change and development. In a nutshell, social capital is the concept that encapsulates the idea of value embedded in social relationships and networks of trust and collaboration. The social capital enthusiasm has its roots on one hand in the acknowledged limitations of classical approaches to tackle down critical social problems and on the other hand in the imperative of producing innovative social development solutions.

Thus, in short we are witnessing a growing interest for two distinct approaches and potentials in social change and development: (1) the reconstruction of social capital and (2) advancing communication for development. It is worthwhile noticing that the revival of interest in communication for social change and development as well as the social capital enthusiasm extend beyond academia. International actors such as the United Nations, World Bank, Unicef have also rapidly integrated information communication technologies and social capital related strategies in their programs aimed at social development. With few exceptions, however the two themes are rarely approached together.

To complicate the issues even more, the social capital – communication technology relationship is not benign. Particularly the rise of social media and the pervasiveness of social networks of communication have brought in the forefront of the academic debate the importance of understanding the implications of communication networks for social capital. In essence, how can we understand social capital, its mechanisms and dynamics as related to the technological revolution and the proliferation of a new type of social networks and communities (Rheingold 2000) in the virtual environment, which at least as suggested by some studies, complement the ones existing in real life?

Furthermore, how can we understand social capital in the context of the changing communication paradigm? And perhaps most important, how can we understand social change and social development from a social capital and communication perspective in a society increasingly (re)constructed around communication networks?

The present chapter aims to address these questions and to contribute to this body of knowledge by exploring social change in the digital era through the lens of the interplay between social capital and network communication. In doing so, I take a different approach as compared to previous studies of social capital in the online era, by introducing a critical social capital perspective. Building on Jürgen Habermas *communicative action theory* and on Manuel Castells *network society* paradigm this chapter discusses the reconfiguration of social capital in the digital age and the implications for social change and development. For the sake of clarity I have divided the chapter in two parts. The first part introduces the concept of communicative social capital and the distinction between *communicative* and *instrumental* social capital by challenging the predominant instrumental rationality in social capital theories. The second part is centred on exploring the implications of some of the most important communication-related changes for social capital in the network society. In so doing, I concentrate on the potentials linked to social capital, social media, and network communication for social change. It is herewith argued that one of the major changes and perhaps one of the most important, in the society of today is the empowerment of collaborative social relationships and networks constructed communicatively, what I have called the empowerment of communicative social capital.

Towards Communicative Social Capital

Social capital is considered one of the most popular and attractive concepts in social sciences in the last 25 years. While there is currently not a single commonly accepted definition of social capital, most scholars agree that social capital refers to the value (of resources) embedded in social relationships networks for individuals and collectives. In other words, being part of the network, regardless whether we refer to individuals, organizations, communities or societies, brings benefits to social actors (Putnam 2001; Ostrom 2003; Lin 2004). In a nutshell, what most scholars are trying to explore and explain through social capital is why some individuals or collectives perform better than others (Putnam 1993; Bartkus and Davis 2010; Ostrom 2010). Since

performance and its determinants are a key-issue in development, whether we think in terms of personal, organizational or social development, the social capital concept has been rapidly adopted by scholars from diverse disciplines – sociology, economy, political science, psychology and most recently communication sciences. It has also been put into practice by global players in social development (e.g The World Bank) or by businesses concerned with expanding their network of strategic alliances. To be sure, economists, sociologists and political scientists have used social capital in many different ways. What however most of them seem to agree upon, is that norms, social networks of trust and collaboration are important for both democratic and economic performance. Thus from this perspective the most informative and also most comprehensive account on social capital appears to be the one of Robert Putnam (1993; 2001) who understands social capital as horizontal networks and civic associations which have essential implications for the productivity of the communities.

Nobel Prize Laureate Elinor Ostrom (2003) argued that one of the explanations for the social capital enthusiasm lies in the fact that classical economic and political approaches appear to have reached their limits. Naturally, innovative theories and practical solutions are necessary to fill in the existing gaps both in the economic and the socio-political arena. Social capital is believed to hold an important promise in this sense both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. As compared to previous approaches social capital scholarship brings in the forefront, previously neglected aspects in social development such as trust, networks of civic engagement and collaboration and social interaction. It has in addition the advantage of new concept in that it provides (still) unexplored potentially fertile ground.

Yet, while the social capital excitement and the impressive scholarly efforts materialized in significant contributions to social capital theory, research and practice, it is not less true that social capital debates have brought several confusions and have yielded some important controversies. For instance, the plethora of definitions produced has not converged into a unified understanding of social capital but has instead added theoretical and foremost methodological confusion to this debate. This has, fortunately, not diminished the scholarly interest of scholars in social capital. However, in the absence of clear frameworks of reference, social capital researchers have often taken (quite) different approaches in studying social capital. Consequently it is not at all surprising that the attempts to come up with answers for the same question often results in different and sometimes contradictory answers. This is for instance the

case with studying the impact of Internet use on social capital, an issue which I will discuss in more detailed in the next section.

Another important vulnerability lies in the fact that current social capital theories are able to explain only partially at best the social capital mechanism. In other words, while there is consistent evidence that social networks have value and contribute to better performance of individuals or communities, it is less clear how this value is accumulated and mobilized.

It goes without saying that this becomes problematic for the advancement of both social capital theory and research and makes the social capital concept vulnerable. Most importantly it poses critical problems for the practical applications for social development and change. In this context, further theoretical development and clarifications of the social capital concept become essential. I have elsewhere (Târnovan 2014) argued that in the current stage, solidifying the theoretical foundations of social capital is a priority for the advancement of the concept and also for future research.

The present article is an attempt to overcome some of these limitations by proposing a critical perspective of social capital grounded in communication sciences. It is hoped that the present approach will help clarify some of the important issues in social capital scholarship, particularly in the context of communication revolution.

One of the strengths of the social capital concept lies in its multi-disciplinary character and promise, what Svendsen & Svendsen have referred to as “the troika of social capital”. Yet, cutting across disciplinary boundaries does not come without challenges among which, one of the most important is to avoid privileging some disciplines over others (Svendsen and Svendsen 2009). In fact, Svendsen & Svendsen use the troika metaphor – referring to sociology, political science and economics – to underline the importance of coordination among disciplines in social capital research which allows “overcoming the artificial demarcation between economic and non-economic areas of research” as related to capitals (Svendsen and Svendsen 2009, 1). Whether it is possible to maintain a perfect coordination between disciplines in social capital research or in research at all is debatable, yet keeping a balance should be achievable.

To date however, the theoretical development of social capital has been shadowed preponderantly by an instrumental rationality and has to high extent been confiscated by economic thinking. This led to the understanding of social relationships and networks in terms of investment and expected benefits in the (market)-place and has privileged the assumption of self-interested atomistic and individualistic human beings. Yet scholars, including the proponents of an

instrumental rationality of social capital, are able to explain only partially the social capital mechanism from this perspective.

This could, of course, not escape harsh critiques such as the one of economist Robert Solow who suggested that this concept is an attempt to fundament the social capital idea through a bad analogy: “Just what is social capital exactly capital of?” asks Solow (2000, 7). Solow’s question is legitimate, for it has found so many different and confusing answers in social capital definitions and studies and sometimes none at all. In the present opinion, the fact that several social capital dilemmas remain unresolved despite of an impressive research body as well as several confusions which continue to make social capital research difficult are very much related to the placement of the social capital concept in the economic sphere.

As I have previously argued elsewhere, while these approaches are highly valuable, they are also reductive in the study of human behaviour and social relationships, let alone communities. Limiting the understanding of social capital to the lens of instrumental rationality is not only impeding the theoretical development of the concept, but it is also distorting its practical application in development programs and/or social policies, which is in fact the main purpose to begin with.

Alternatively, based on Jürgen Habermas’ Communicative Action Theory, I have proposed understanding social capital from a communication science perspective, through the lens of communicative rationality. As I will try to show, this approach is not only intended to facilitate the advancement in social capital theory but it has important implications for the practice of social development and change. To do so, I will first briefly reconstitute the theoretical development of social capital by highlighting the limits in current social capital theories and subsequently I will attempt to explain social capital in terms of communicative rationality.

To date we can distinguish between four most influential approaches in the social capital literature: (1) Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) social constructivist approach, (2) James S. Coleman’s (1988) rational choice approach, (3) Robert Putnam’s (1993; 2001) collective action and civic engagement approach and (4) Nan Lin’s (2004) structural theory of social capital. As Ostrom (2003) notes, the founding idea of social capital – that social relationships have value for individuals and collectives – is not at all new in social sciences. The importance of relationships for individuals, the pursuit of collective action, community sense and belonging as well as the added value of participation to public life for governance and self-governance, community development and democracy may

be traced back to scholars like Aristotle¹, later to Alexis de Tocqueville², Lyda Hanifan (1916) and Glenn Loury (1977), to name but a few. Indeed, the fundamental idea behind the recently introduced social capital concept is not new. Still the articulation of a concept to account for the value of networks in relationship to community development but also individual development has revived the scholarly interest in this direction of thought. And, why not admit, the economic-centric discourse has played an important role in this process, particularly in the context of the late capitalism as dominant ideology. As a result a substantive body of studies has been produced since the introduction of the concept and more precisely since the release of Robert Putnam's study *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Despite of its critiques, Robert Putnam remains the scholar to be credited for the social capital enthusiasm.

The first important contribution to social capital theory may be traced back to Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) article "The forms of capital". From a social constructivist perspective, Pierre Bourdieu proposes a concept firmly anchored in his theory of practice, based on *habitus* and *field* that is on the dispositions of

¹ For Aristotle man is a political animal with desires to live within a community and in relationship with others sometimes purposively driven and yet again sometimes in the absence of an interest or purpose "even when men have no need of assistance from each other they nonetheless desire to live together. At the same time, they are also brought together by common interest so far as each achieves a share of the good life" (Aristotle 1959, 201).

² During his journey, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French aristocrat, studying democracy in America, 1831 was impressed by the American model of that time, which can shortly be characterized by the social actor's control and regulation ownership from smaller to larger social entities, being it social group, community or society itself. "The citizen of the United States is taught from his earliest infancy to rely upon his own exertions in order to resist the evils and the difficulties of life; he looks upon social authority with an eye of mistrust and anxiety, and he only claims its assistance when he is quite unable to shift without it. This habit may be traced in the schools of the rising generation, where the children in their games are wont to submit to rules, which they have themselves defined. The same spirit pervades every act of social life. If a stoppage occurs in a thoroughfare, and the circulation of public is hindered the neighbours immediately constitute a deliberative body; and this extemporaneous assembly gives rise to an executive power, which remedies the inconvenience before anybody has thought of recurring to an authority superior to that of the person immediately concerned. If the public pleasures are concerned, an association is formed to provide for splendour and the regularity of entertainment (...) in the United States associations are established to promote public order, commerce, industry, morality and religion." (de Tocqueville 2007, 136).

social actors to construct and maintain valuable social networks. To understand Bourdieu's concept of social capital however, it is critical to first understand his philosophy. Otherwise we are at risk at mistakenly interpreting Bourdieu's concept in an economic logic, as has previously been the case. In fact as Svendsen and Svendsen (2009) correctly observe, Bourdieu overcomes the boundaries between economic and non-economic spheres by transferring the focus on a larger concept of capital assimilated with power (Bourdieu 1986). For Bourdieu, the reproduction of capitals is indissolubly bound to the propensity of acting according to the "rules of the game", determined by field and *habitus*, where the ultimate stake is power, precisely "the type of power effective in the field in question" (Bourdieu 1986, 54). Thus social actors do not act as a result of calculations in terms of investment-benefits but according to their position in the field and their dispositions, values and lifestyles (*habitus*) acquired through everyday practice. Also, depending on the field, capital can present itself, according to Bourdieu in three forms – economic, cultural and social –, which under certain circumstances, are convertible into one another. This is why, in Bourdieu's view, the demarcation between economic, cultural and social capital is practically impossible.

Bourdieu himself clarifies this in an interview offered to Loïc Wacquant (1989) and explains that, any resemblance in his work to economic thinking is strictly terminological. Furthermore the strategic action oriented towards maximization of material profit must be understood as "the propensity to act, which is born out of the relationship between the field and a system of dispositions adjusted to the game". The issue at stake for Bourdieu is not to advocate for an economic supremacy but to explain how social structures and social actors reproduce inequalities as a result of domination and power struggle.

By taking a different position Coleman, also known as main proponent of rational choice theory, introduces the social capital concept as an instrument of reconciliation between two intellectual streams – the sociological stream and the economic stream. Coleman introduces social capital with the declared intent to subscribe it to instrumental rationality, but recognizes at the same time that, as compared to other types of capital – tangible in their nature –, social capital cannot obey the same rules due to its *public* character. Thus, while the rational choice paradigm may arguably explain social capital developed at individual level (i.e. strategically constructed networks of friends) it is not able to provide a solid theoretical foundation for social capital at collective level. For instance, why do some groups or communities perform better than others? As Häuberer observes, social actors do not have an incentive and remain unaware of the potential value they might subtract from the performance of the entire network.

Coleman recognizes this problem, yet he does not resolve it and does not provide an equivalent alternative to rational action oriented towards gains.

Robert Putnam (1993, 2001) introduces the social capital concept in his endeavour to overcome traditional collective dilemmas and to explain the (differentiated) performance of democratic institutions by accounting for historical, cultural and economic factors. Why, asks Putnam, do some institutions perform better than others (1993). Drawing on Coleman's rational choice approach, game theory and the more general collective action approaches, Putnam finds the answer to his question in the "civic community", characterized by vibrant networks of trust and solidarity, voluntary associations, collective action and high civic engagement. In his view, collective action becomes possible based on existing social capital which he defines as "trust, norms and networks". "The denser such networks in a community, the more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit", argues Putnam (1993, 173). In brief, democratic performance is to a high extent determined by the civic community which varies in degrees of "civicness" according to the existent stock of social capital. Putnam's attempts to explain social capital by drawing on de Tocqueville's argument of collaboration based on "self-interest properly understood" and sensitive to the interest of the other. He remains thus in the same logic of instrumental rationality, albeit a milder version, which by any counts does neither resolve collective action issues or prisoner's dilemma, nor does it explain how norms and trust come to be established in the first place.

Nan Lin (2004) is the first to propose a structural theory of social capital centred on the intrinsic value of social networks which, if mobilized produce benefits for social actors. Nan Lin places the three above mentioned contributions in the neoclassical camp and subscribes them to the corresponding principle of social action oriented towards profit maximization. Lin explains the social capital mechanism by employing arguments of transactional rationality, which direct the calculation of costs and benefits in social relations suggesting an affiliation pattern based on criteria such as prestige, social recognition, hierarchical positions etc. In other words, social capital is built strategically by connecting with other with as some point in time are susceptible of producing value in one's life by means of exchanges and "social debts". One of the critical problems related to these exchanges is their asymmetric character. Consequently, Lin assumes that both social actors involved acknowledge the asymmetry of transactions so that a social credit is created (for the first social actor) and equally a social debit (for the second social actor).

Later, in a study of social capital implications in the job search process observes that a reduced number of individuals utilize social resources in this sense and more than that they are not disadvantaged on the labour market. The author proposes a complementary approach invoking the invisible hand of social capital, which through the unintended performance of the entire network produces benefits to individuals. At the same time, he recognizes that the success of the network is the result of the circulation of information through everyday conversations and not of an instrumental action or strategy of activating the social networks, nevertheless underlines that not all information exchange should be regarded as freed of purpose. Similar to Coleman, Lin acknowledged eventually the limits of his own approach when returning to practice.

I have tried, so far, to summarize the main approaches which, up to the present, have served as reference in the social capital literature. In doing so, I have shown that social capital theory has preponderantly developed within an economically deterministic paradigm. To be sure, this is to a high extent the result of the understanding of social capital in the logic of instrumental rationality, but also of several misinterpretations (the case of Bourdieu). Be that as it may, social capital theory appears to have been confiscated by an economic thinking and social actors have been reduced to an individualist, self-interested condition.

As I have stressed before, this is problematic for several reasons. First, scholars including the most convinced proponents of an instrumental perspective of social capital are not able to explain the complex mechanism of social capital, particularly as related to its public character. This is not only impeding the advancement in social capital theory (several questions remain without answer) but it equally makes the concept itself vulnerable by failing to provide it with a solid foundation. Secondly, privileging at a theoretical level a discourse of “marketplace” relationships, networks, communities and societies is misleading in terms of development interventions and public policies aimed at resolving or diminishing important social problems. Thus, if social capital is best understood in terms of development and performance – economic and/or non-economic – then the issue at stake would be to explain (1) why are some individuals, groups, communities, organizations etc. richer in social capital than others and (2) what exactly underlies the creation, maintenance, development and ultimately mobilization of social capital? Until now scholars have tried to answer these questions in economic terms. I argue that this is not only theoretically and empirically flawed but also profoundly misleading. We might end up trapped in the same very limits of economic thinking, which scholars

sought to overcome with the introduction of the social capital concept in the first place.

Since social capital at its core represents a set of interlaced social relationships endowed with all sorts of resources and further since all social relationships are primarily constructed through communication, I suggest that it might be more informative to attempt to understand the social capital mechanism from a communication centred perspective. Without pretending to solve all dilemmas, I argue that Jürgen Habermas' communicative action theory (1987) may shed a different light on the social capital mechanism and may also facilitate overcoming some of the difficulties in social capital theory and practice. In this view social capital is understood through the lens of communicative rationality, as I will attempt to explain in the following.

In the attempt to resolve complex issues of societal rationalization Habermas (1987) proposed communicative rationality as foundation of social action, which as opposed to purposive rational action is not oriented towards success but *towards mutual understanding*. It must be underlined from the very beginning that communicative action is not to be equated with any communication act. As Habermas underlines, only that particular social action must be understood as communicative in which the orientation is primarily towards reaching shared understanding in the absence of other intentions of persuasion or manipulation. In this view, rational actors are understood in their relationship to the world and other. They do not act in order to pursue their immediate interests but seek to achieve consensus through argumentation. By contrary purposive rationality assumes an atomistic interventionist actor and neglects the relationship of actors to the world which is "essential to social interaction" (Habermas 1987, 274). In other words, says Habermas, purposive action "does not consider the mechanisms for coordinating action through which interpersonal relationships come about" (Habermas 1987, 273) and attempts to fill in this theoretical lacuna by introducing communicative action. Thus, we can distinguish between social actions according to the orientation adopted by social actors –towards understanding vs. success. As Mitrovic (1999) remarks, Habermas is pleading for argumentation and communicative principles instead of success principles, for he was confident that practical issues of social life can be resolved by the rational discourse among people. Departing from this vision Habermas believed that in essence the crisis of capitalist societies is the result of the intrusion of the system in the lifeworld of individuals through its colonization and limitation of freedoms. Hereof the necessity of the lifeworld restoration.

Returning to the core idea of social capital – value *of* and value *embedded in* social networks-it is argued that communicative action makes possible surpassing the (narrow) boundaries of purposive – rationality in understanding the social capital mechanism. In this view, dialogue and genuine conversations and openness to the other become central pillars in social capital development. Social capital is constructed, maintained and renewed based on shared values, meanings and consensus achieved communicatively and not on optimized calculations and investment strategies.

It follows that we can differentiate between two different types of social capital according to the rationality of the social action: *instrumental* social capital and *communicative* social capital. *Instrumental social capital* represents the value embedded in social networks and relationships accumulated and activated as a result of instrumental action oriented towards gains and success, whereas *communicative social capital* represents the value embedded in social networks and relationships accumulated and activated as a result of communicative action oriented towards shared understanding.

Put simple, at individual level the difference between the two types of social capital is in fact the difference between authentic friendships and the network of authentic relationships thereof and “friendships” and relationships based on one-sided or two-sided gains. At collective level communicative social capital translates into communicatively generated collective action and/or civic engagement, that is as a result of consensual rational debate.

It is important to underline at this point that the absence of teleology in social relationships and networks building does not minimize the value of such networks, if anything it is believed to increase it. John Dewey (1923; 2012, 3) once wrote: “There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common” and goes on: „The communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions – like ways of responding to expectations and requirements. (...) Individuals do not even compose a social group because they all work for a common end. The parts of a machine work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a common result, but they do not form a community. If, however, they were all cognizant of the common end and all interested in it so that they regulated their specific activity in view of it, then they would form a community. But this would involve communication. Each would have to know what the other was about and would have to have some

way of keeping the other informed as to his own purpose and progress. Consensus demands communication.”

Thus, in this view, the foundation of solid social relationships and communities is the consensually achieved commonality through genuine communication and orientation to what is “shared” and community purpose is internalized. Put simply, social actors engage in conversations oriented towards reaching consensus based on shared meanings. It is this consensus achieved communicatively and shared values upon which social relationships and networks are constructed, maintained and also mobilized.

To be sure, this does not rule out strategically pursued actions and strategic communication aimed at building social capital. Particularly in the business sectors this is a common practice (e.g. marketing strategies) and technological affordances may have come as a blessing for many practitioners oriented in employing networks strategically for economic reasons. Needless to say that this applies similarly for any individual or organization interested in expanding their networks. However as Esser (2008) correctly observes, even in the case of strategic relationships “each ‘intentional’ or ‘strategic’ investment in a relationship requires at least the pretence that is about more than just optimizing access and the selfish control of the other’s resources” because a rational actor “*has* to have some very *good* friends, with whom he regularly meets together with their friends, and whom he does not simply regard as an optimal means to relational capital although, aside from the intrinsic gain attached to them, that is exactly what they are (Esser 2008, 35). In other words, Esser reaches the conclusion that there is a minimum of authentic relationships required, upon which actors can subsequently build social capital strategically (e.g. by investing in weak ties³). Furthermore the success of strategically built social capital depends on what I have called communicative social capital because the essential ingredients for the sustainability of social capital is trust; and the establishment and maintenance of trust is incompatible with egoistic orientations in relationships (Esser 2008).

The issue is perhaps even more simple in the case of collectively build social capital (i.e. community-level, group-level etc.) and has been summarized by Coleman (1988) and by Häuberer (2011). In the logic proposed by the investment paradigm all actors (or at least the majority) would have to be aware of the network’s benefit in order to invest in it. Furthermore, being aware of the potential benefits is not enough. Social actors would simultaneously have to

³ The idea of benefits derived from weak ties may be traced back to Mark Granovetter’s (1983) study “The Strength of Weak Ties”

trust in the performance of the network, otherwise according to the same token it might be more beneficial to withdraw from the game and optimize their own benefits. Esser (2008, 38) acknowledges this and argues that the success of system capital⁴ depends on systems trust, the validity of values, norms and morality. He further defines system morality as “the morality of reciprocal commitment and the ‘validity’ of norms and values comprising all actors” and argues that „[s]ystem morality consists of a specific, orientating attitude that directs actions simply because actors conform automatically without considering ‘egoistic’ consequences” (Esser 2008, 39). Of course the question which Esser leaves unanswered is how social actors come to “conform automatically in the first place and does not clarify how exactly values, norms and morality are established.

I have thus proposed that communicative action oriented towards understanding is able to explain moral will formation and perhaps most important it allows explaining the success of social networks, based on shared values, norms and morality.

At this point it is important to emphasize that this approach is not to be interpreted in an idealist and utopian view of social capital. First, it is a response and simultaneously alternative to the limits of economic thinking as related to social capital, identified even by the most vehement proponents of an instrumental explanation of social capital. Secondly, the distinction is worthwhile both analytically and discursively because even if social capital has been theoretically and methodologically used to account for performance – most of the time at the intersection of the social, the economic and the political sphere – the performance at stake to begin with was democratic performance.

Finally it is a pledge in favour of what Yochai Benkler (2011) has insightfully termed “Penguin” a metaphor of the triumph of collaboration among non-selfish and non-atomistic individuals, metaphor which he sustained by facts. It is however so that the success of communicative social capital has been and still is to a high extent threatened by the „colonization of the lifeworld”. This is why applying communicative rationality to social capital has essential implications, far beyond theoretical enhancements of the concept. It suggests a different approach in grass-roots social development based on privileging genuine and authentic communication as a prerequisite for social

⁴ In the attempt to resolve the individual-collective character dilemma of social capital Esser (2008) proposes the distinction between *relational* and *system* capital whereby *relational social capital* refers to those interpersonal relations as resources for individuals, while *system capital* corresponds to the public good character of social capital.

capital maintenance and development. This requires actions aimed at creating and preserving spaces which allow horizontal, dialogic communication, where social actors can communicatively build social capital. Even more important, it requires the empowerment of social actors and their liberation from oppressive power structures, in Habermas' terms, the restoration of the lifeworld.

I have argued that this is perhaps more important today than any other time in history. This is so because, as I will try to show, Internet and social media in particular appear to have created unprecedented opportunities for communicative social capital. At the same time, more sceptical scholars suggest caution with regard to the communication revolution optimism (Fuchs 2014; Fuchs and Sandoval 2014). Indeed, interactive communication networks appear to be a double edged sword. In this context, it is crucial to understand both the opportunities and threats brought about by the development of information and communication technologies. In this light, the question is no longer whether these technologies and social media increase, decrease or supplement social capital, but rather what potentials are there for the (re)construction of communicative social capital and/or instrumental social capital. The following section will attempt to sketch a partial answer to this question by concentrating on the potentials of Internet and social media for the construction of communicative social capital.

Communicative Social capital in the Network Society

I have so far attempted to introduce a new concept – *communicative social capital* – which is believed to be useful in analysing and understanding social change in the newly emerged network society from a social capital perspective.

The technological communication revolution and the growing importance of communication and communication networks for social change and development has been acknowledged by several distinguished scholars of social sciences in their endeavours to analyse society, social structure and social organization (Touraine 1971; Bell 1976; Bakardjieva 2005). In fact, there have been several attempts to attach a label to post-industrial society according to the communication related perspective or particular emphasis intended by the authors. Some of these labels have quickly been integrated in the public discourse such as *Information Society* (Bell 1976) or *the Internet Society* (Bakardjieva 2005).

Departing from this view and given the increasingly rapid diffusion of communication networks, social capital scholars have promptly engaged in research aimed at revealing the consequences of Internet and online communication for social capital (Wellman *et al.* 2001, Ellison, Steinfeld and Lampe 2007; Ellison *et al.* 2014). Yet, the scholarly interest has predominantly gravitated around the impact of social media, online communication and Internet use on social capital as it has been traditionally understood. The main concern in this sense was that information communication technologies would negatively affect social capital by confiscating even more the attention and time of individuals, resulting in a decreased involvement in offline social interaction with family and friends. By the same token, scholars feared that the diffusion of communication networks and the spread of social media would create a networked individualism, resulting in the even more serious alienation from community affairs and a decrease in social capital accordingly. Thus from this perspective the issue at stake was to determine whether the online environment would positively or negatively impact social capital. These efforts were primarily motivated by the importance of social capital for both individual and social development. Determining the consequences of Internet use for social capital gained even more importance in the light of its alarming decrease in the last 50 years reported by Putnam (2001) for the United States or others (Voicu 2010) for European countries.

Recovering social capital however, requires first understanding the causes of its decline and identifying what exactly could contribute to its revival. Unfortunately, these types of studies have reached most often than not quite contradictory conclusions. As a consequence, the answer to the increase/decrease question remains to date uncertain. This is not surprising given the diversity of approaches and measures employed in social capital research. I have elsewhere (Târnovan 2014) covered in more detail the challenges in social capital research, particularly as related to the information and communication technologies. I will briefly take up here two important aspects of the issue. The first part of the problem stems from the theories which propose an instrumental view of social capital and fail to explain its mechanism. The other part of the issue is that there is no other satisfactory understanding of social capital. I have tried to remediate both problems by introducing a communicative perspective of social capital. To be blunt, as I will try to show in the following, the language of economics is no longer sufficient, if it ever was, to explain the value accumulated in social networks – social capital, nor its manifestation and its concrete outcomes in society.

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As it has probably become clear by now, the perspective I seek to advance in this essay is somewhat different. My proposition is thus that a critical approach may cast a different light on the social capital dynamics in the online era. In this sense distinguishing between communicative and instrumental social capital should be able to provide the framework for rethinking the analysis of social capital reconfiguration in the digital age or at least to open up new paths to be explored. I have tried to argue in the first part of the article that social performance driven by social capital, be it economic or non-economic, manifested at collective or individual level, could be explained by understanding social capital through the lens of communicative rationality. In this view both economic and democratic performance are at the very core rooted in communicative action oriented towards reaching understanding, rational debate, participation etc. If this is correct, the issue at stake becomes to question and understand the implications and potential(s) of the Internet – if any – for the restoration of *communicative social capital*.

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A little over a decade ago, Manuel Castells (2004, 2010) brought to our attention in his ground-breaking trilogy the rise of an altered society constructed around networks powered by communication or in short, *the network society*. Despite its share of critiques, Castells' analysis of the contemporary society in the context of information and communication development remains to date, the most resonant and certainly most influential among social scientists. The network society represents in Castells (2004, 3) view the networked configuration of “organizational arrangements of humans in relations of production, consumption, reproduction, experience, and power expressed in meaningful communication coded by culture” enabled by information and communication technologies. Yet, neither the network structure nor communication, are in themselves the innovation of today's society. As Castells himself (2004) clarifies, networks are “the fundamental pattern of social life” and obviously no more characteristic to the twenty-first century societies than any other historical era whatsoever. And the same is true for communication and communication networks for that matter. What Castells (2004, 42) proposes is to understand society in the context of information and communication technology development in terms of the “networking capacity of institutions, organizations, and social actors, both locally and globally”, enabled by communication

technologies. Unlike the vertically organized industrial society – based on hierarchies and centralized power and control, the newly emerged network society is constructed around horizontal decentralized networks of communication.

The rise of the network society has brought along significant changes which at least as suggested by some scholars (Castells 2004; 2009; Shirky 2012; Benkler 2011) are both the engine and the instruments of social transformation and change.

While not pretending to exhaust the list I will discuss three of these changes – in communication, community and culture – which are believed to be important for understanding the potential for communicative social capital in the network society: (1) the creation of communicative spaces and the empowerment of autonomous network communication oriented towards understanding (2) the potential of building communities of shared values, interests and beliefs (3) the cultural reprogramming from individualism to collaboration and collectivism.

First, Internet has created new communicative spaces and has enabled networked conversations surpassing time and space. Castells (2007, 2009) suggests that we are witnessing a fundamental change in the communication paradigm through the emergence of a new form of communication, *mass self-communication* (Castells, 2009). This new type of communication permits the self-direction and selection of messages while at the same time enabling the transmission of messages to a global audience. The development of communication technologies has made possible the transition from one-to-one (interpersonal) communication and one-to-many (mass-communication) to the more complex many-to-many communication. More than that, the omnipresence and pervasiveness of communication networks transformed mass-communication into a mass-resource. In other words, anyone who possesses a computer, Internet connection and the knowledge to use it can communicate *to* and *with* a global audience. As Clay Shirky (2008) puts it “Everyone is a media outlet”. This is arguably weakening the power of traditional media and sets the scene for the rise of alternative media and citizen media as counter-voices in society.

Unlike traditional unidirectional vertical mass-communication (TV, Radio, print), Internet allows the organization of social actors in horizontal networks of communication (Castells 2009; Servaes 2014). People come together in these new communicative spaces, engage in create new meanings

through communicative action upon which their collective identity is cultivated. At the same time, united rather by what they have in common than by what differentiates them, people participate in networked discussions and debates about education, politics, community related issues among others (Dahlgren 2005). In short, social actors use Internet to organize mass discussions on various topics and issues which matter to them. On the basis of these networked debates and conversations they further build and “advance projects, defend their interests and assert their values” (Castells 2009, 57). Castells (2009, 246) identifies six types of what he calls “projects of autonomy” of individual and collective social actors, amongst which projects of communicative autonomy and projects of socio-political participation aimed at challenging dominant structures, addressing social problems or giving voice (and power thereof) to marginalized groups. Several scholars (Constanza-Chock 2010; Mercea 2012; Castells 2012; Bruun 2013) have documented the use of Internet and communication networks in social movements, political and civic participation.

Internet appears to have created the conditions for a virtual version of Habermas’ coffee-shops and the revival of the public sphere as drivers of collective action and resistance to social inequalities. Indeed countless forums, online groups, chat-rooms and the like have flourished in the last years and continue to colonize the online space, where civic initiatives, social movements and alternative journalism have found a home. “When we change the way we communicate, we change society” argues Clay Shirky (2008). In this light, the development of information communication technologies appears in fact to have accomplished the creation of what de Sola Pool (1983) and later Castells (2009) called “technologies of freedom”.

From this perspective, network communication becomes a resource for capabilization (Sen 1999) and empowerment of individuals and collectives by privileging multiple voices, including those previously silenced. Thus, mass-self communication represents a source of counter-power that is in Castells words “the capacity by social actors to challenge and eventually change the power relations institutionalized in society” (Castells 2007).

This could not have been possible without lowering barriers of access to horizontal communication networks and “augmentation of the body and mind of human subjects⁵ in networks of interaction powered by microelectronics-based,

⁵ Building on Alain Touraine, Castells (2001) defines subjects as “collective social actor through which individuals reach holistic meaning in their experience”.

software-operated, communication technologies” (Castells 2004, p. 6). This brings the in the forefront the second important change brought about by the communication revolution: the potential of building communities and collective identities based primarily on shared values and interests and not on geographical or spatial proximity.

The architecture of the online environment enables the construction of social relationships and facilitates communication within social networks surpassing any barriers related to time and space. In the absence of geographical constraints, communities constructed on the grounds of shared values and like-mindedness have rapidly populated the online environment (Rheingold 2000). In this sense the critical change brought about by Internet and development of communication networks does not lie in the fact that they supplement traditional means of communication and foster communication among members of a community. This is important indeed but what is meant here is something else, namely that Internet allows the reconstruction of identities around primary identities⁶ as essential source of social meaning (Castells 2010). Similarly, Hampton (2004) suggests that because people are no longer bound to traditional spaces they will increasingly seek to establish relationships based on shared interest and mutual identification rather than shared place “Freedom from the constraints of place provides Internet users with the opportunity to explore aspects of individual identity and interest that previously may have been repressed or lacked a critical mass of others” (Hampton 2004, 218). In Castells’ network society, identity reconstruction is rooted in the tension between the Net and the Self and is articulated in three forms: (1) legitimation identity; (2) resistance identity (3) project identity. Resistance identities emerge around “communes” (religion, territories, family, community) as a result of the struggle to resist domination or oppression – “the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded” (Castells 2010, 9) and may under circumstances generate projects „of a different life” and transform into legitimizing identities (civil society). As Castells sees it, legitimizing identities are undergoing a serious crisis and the major potential of social change lies in their recovery, which in turn is rooted in the emergence of projects advanced by collective actors of social change.

Verma and Shin (2004) propose that the opposition between the Net and the Self in Castells can be interpreted as analogous to Habermas’ tension between system and lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). This is indeed consistent with

⁶ Primary identity is understood as “identity that frames the other” (Castells, 2010, 7).

Habermas' interpretation of social movements as actors struggling to reclaim their lifeworld. While Castells clearly detaches himself from Habermas, one can easily sense similarities between the two scholars particularly in their aspirations. "I believe in rationality and in the possibility of calling upon reason, without worshipping its goddess" confesses Castells in the opening of his trilogy. This inevitably reminds us of Habermas' commitment to communicative rationality grounded in consensual will and opinion formation.

Finally, the rise of the network society raises questions related to the value and culture of the newly emerged society. To be sure, debating the issue of culture and cultural change in information society has been for a while the focus of scholars concerned with the reconfigurations brought about by globalization and development of communication technologies. The prevailing issue related to cultures in a globalized world powered by information and communication technologies can be briefly summarized as the global-local dilemma and the fear of homogenization at the expense of national cultures. A detailed discussion focused on global vs. local cultures exceeds the purpose of this paper, yet since in the context of globalization academic debate has gravitated around this dichotomy it is important to point it out.

Castells (2004) proposes a different approach in his analysis of culture and advances the hypothesis that the culture of the network society is a culture of communication *between* different cultures based, not necessarily on shared values but on the shared value of communication and on the power of networking. In other words, it is a culture of dialogue between cultures, characterized by the openness to *the other*. In a nutshell, what Castells proposes is that the culture of the network society is one of empowerment through sharing, networking and collaboration "a belief in the power of the network, in your empowerment by being open to others, and in the joy of diversity" (2004, 39). To make his case, Castells draws upon Pekka Himanen's example of the *hacker culture* which Himanen uses as synonym with the culture of innovation to describe the culture of enthusiastic programmers passionate about code and committed to innovation through collaboration. He complements Himanen's analysis by inserting the "sharing" component as related to the hacker ethic. In his analysis focused on social movements Juris (2004, 342) also refers to "the cultural logic of networking" built upon openness and collaboration at its core. From a somewhat different angle, Henry Jenkins (2006) introduces the participatory culture concept to explain fandom, community of fans and their cultural production as resistance to social and cultural isolation. According to

Jenkins' depiction, communities of fans are based on consensus and participation in cultural production and creation.

While there are some differences or to be more precise, some specificity in the approaches cited above, they all appear to share a common ground. There seems to be a consensus that collaboration, networking, sharing and openness are essential elements of the culture of the network society.

The above analysis allows a conclusion up to this point as related to communicative social capital in the network society: consensus oriented communication networks and the collaborative value of social relationships and networks are the key elements upon which network society and its culture are constructed. As Verma and Shin (2004, 134) notice "Castells' description matches the spirit of what Habermas might have called 'communicative action' and shows the mutual relevance of their approaches in a fundamental way". While Castells (2004; 2007) dismisses Habermas views as utopian, I argue that in fact Habermas' ideas are relevant in the context of the rise of a network society, perhaps more than ever before. What I have called communicative social capital appears to represent a pillar of the network society and of social change as envisioned by Castells. In fact, Castells (2012, 219) himself recognizes in his book dedicated to an extensive analysis of social movements that social change is effected through collective action which is induced by communicative action. Castells explains this dynamics of social movements by drawing on arguments from neuroscience. In this perspective social actors manage to organize in collective action by overcoming their fear in the process of communicative action "by sharing and identifying with others" (2012, 219).

Juris (2004, 342) advanced a similar view in his attempt to analyse social movements in the network society: "I introduce the term 'cultural logic of networking' as a way to conceive the broad guiding principles, shaped by the logic of informational capitalism, which are internalized by activists and generate concrete networking practices. This logic specifically involves an embedded and embodied set of social and cultural dispositions that orient actors toward: (1) building horizontal ties and connections among diverse, autonomous elements; (2) the free and open circulation of information; (3) collaboration through decentralized coordination and directly democratic decision-making; and (4) self-directed or self-managed networking." While Juris draws on Bourdieu to introduce his view on the logic of networking he detaches himself from "a mechanistic and hopeless *habitus*" because in his view "the network has become a powerful cultural ideal, particularly among more radical global justice

activists, a guiding logic that provides both a model of and a model for emerging forms of directly democratic politics on local, regional, and global scales” and “networks are increasingly associated with values related to grassroots participatory democracy, self-management, horizontal connectedness, and decentralized coordination based on autonomy and diversity (Juris 2004, 342). Juris does not refer to Habermas or his theories of social transformation, yet in the present opinion, this view like the one of Manuel Castells points in fact towards the Habermasian project of communicative resistance and emancipation against a system dominated by instrumental rationality.

Indeed, social movements seem to be one of the important manifestations of communicative social capital in the context of the communication revolution. I argue however that social movements do not exhaust all the forms under which communicative social capital contributes to social change and development in the network society. Instead the echo of communicative social capital mobilization becomes increasingly sharp in several other areas of social change and development. Examples are the various collaborative projects of people which Castells calls projects of autonomy. This is so because in the network society, technological innovation has succeeded in setting the scene for social innovation or as Yochai Benkler (2011, 23) puts it “Internet has revolutionized how we produce information and the knowledge foundations of our society. In his view the fundamental change brought about by the Internet is that it „has allowed social, nonmarket behaviour to move from the periphery of the industrial economy to the very core of the global networked economy”. In a social capital language, the development of information communication technologies has succeeded in empowering networks of social relationships created beyond instrumental rationality and a market-driven behaviour which has up to the present times come to dominate the logic of social relationships, let alone networks.

What is specific to the network society is the propensity of social actors to construct, maintain and reconfigure social relationships and networks – social capital – communicatively – through communication oriented towards understanding and not towards success. I have defined *communicative social capital* as *resources embedded in social relations, which as a result of communicative action and practices, individuals and collectives can benefit from*. In other words communicative social capital represents the value embedded in social relationships and networks constructed in the logic of communicative rationality. This type of social capital is, in the present view, the

engine of social change in the network society. What we are currently witnessing and participating in is a constant social (re)configuration around sets of interlaced social relationships constructed communicatively. Both individuals and collectives build social capital based on shared interests and mutual understanding achieved through everyday communication which further enables the coordination of large or small scale projects. To be sure, not all these projects are necessarily oriented towards change or development, yet many of them are.

While perhaps the most easily perceived embodiment of communicative social capital is in the political arena – in the form of various social movements for instance, its traces may be grasped in many aspects of social life. As I have stressed earlier communicative social capital is not to be understood as a product of the network society. Yet, the digital revolution has created the necessary conditions for communicative social capital to be easier developed, maintained and mobilized. In this view the development of information and communication technologies cannot be understood merely as technological innovation but simultaneously as the driver of social innovation and change.

Conclusions

Reading all the above in the logic of social capital, the network society appears to hold an important potential for the empowerment of what I have called communicative social capital. People are granted access to mass communication, vertical communication networks are replaced by their (more) democratic counterparts – horizontal networks –, communicative spaces and communication networks facilitate the reconstruction of identities based on shared values, and last but not least, collaboration appears to have won the battle against egocentrism and individualism. If we are to accept this perspective, the network society appears to reconstruct the entire logic of social organization in a quite promising way. This is so because all the changes presented earlier point towards one major social innovation made possible by the development of information communication technologies: the recalibration of social power through the empowerment of communicative social capital.

Peter Drucker (1965) had very well anticipated this, comparing the consequences of today's technological development with the first great technology revolution as a pillar for the establishment of irrigation civilization.

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It was not only the irrigation technology per se to characterize irrigation civilizations but also the social and political innovation it brought about. So, the implications of the introduction of irrigation technology reached far beyond its practical application and its advantages because it meant an entire social and political and most importantly cultural reorganization of society. This seems to resemble very much the reconstruction of today's society because the digital revolution fosters technological innovation inasmuch as it is the engine behind social innovation. One of the main social innovations of the present days lies in the creation of the conditions for social actors to realize their potential beyond instrumental rationality. This includes the change of the governments' and corporations' perspectives of individuals. Even if not in this sophisticated and rather academic specific terminology, social actors become more and more aware of this potential. This is why perhaps one of the strongest social movements is organized around the ideal of free speech and free internet.

The fact remains however, that at least for the time being the "technologies of freedom" are to a large extent controlled and colonized by corporations and governments with their specific agendas. This raises inevitably questions related to potential threats for communicative social capital. If the promise for social change and development in the network society is to be understood in terms of power, empowerment and emancipation, then it becomes equally important to understand the implications of Internet and social media for the oppressor or the "excluder" in Castells terms, not only for the oppressed. While a detailed discussion on this topic exceeds the purpose of the present chapter, it is nevertheless important to open up this debate for future analysis.

This is not to be read in a pessimistic note, rather in a sceptic one, which suggests caution for Internet enthusiasts, including myself. As I have hopefully managed to show, there is indeed an important potential in the network society for reducing inequalities, improving democratic performance and empowering communities. Yet for this potential to be fully realized, free media and communication are a prerequisite.

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Open Data, Ideology of Liberation, and Open Government*

Constantin Vică

We live in the exciting times of digital information. Spreading like a virus, information and data technology inseminate and shape every aspect of societies and human life. Political life and the realm of politics make no exception. The *culture of openness* that the internet has easily given birth to led to political movements of liberating everything from every possible dominion. The *open data movement* is a paradigmatic case of this strategy. Its aim is to open data for public reuse for every social, political, economic or scientific endeavor; by opening data we actually unlock the potential for science, politics, economy or the practical life to be more inclusive. It can hardly be contested that open data brings about the values of a true democracy.

My disagreement is not with the broad potential of unlocking data, but with the claim that *open public and government data* promotes political engagement and participation, improves debate and deliberation thus advancing open government, and implicitly its specific ruling and policies. In order to express my different view I will initially explain the meaning and use of open data, its inherent dual nature (political and technological), its characteristics as a *commons*, so that I can expose empirically illustrative facts about the open data movement. At this point I engage in a philosophical quest to detect which ideology stands behind it. Once the ideological profile is detected and set, I draw the map of direct used arguments when it comes to assess the potential of open data. The last two moves are philosophical: I firstly investigate the open data claim in the light of an ideal political theory, that is, the deliberative-epistemic conception of democracy; then I make an epistemological argument against open data.

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Open data is a global movement; its potential to rethink politics in the frame of data-driven democracy is under scrutiny in the following pages.

What is Open Data?

Let me begin by answering the question of *open data* before philosophically assessing the notion of data and its relationship with information. Such definition is, by default, of a stipulative kind: a new term without established use needs to be stipulated a specific meaning in order to ensure a coherent and truthful exercise in arguments. Hence, open data is something brought into social and political existence by mere declaration:

Open data is data that can be freely used, reused and redistributed by anyone – subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and sharealike. (“What Is Open Data? – Open Data Handbook” 2012)

The main feature of this type of data is its *openness* not only in access, but also in its use. Still, the definition needs some other requisites in order to accomplish the goal of openness; I summarize four of them stated in the “Open Data Handbook” (2012). *Availability and access* is a necessary condition because they impose the form of data as a whole, the channel of access, *i.e.* the internet, and the format which must be convenient, that is, open to further modifications. *Reuse and redistribution* structure the second core condition: open datasets must be able to be intermixed with any other dataset. The *universal participation* proviso is, in my opinion, the most important, being a principle with deep philosophical roots; everyone must be entitled to use, reuse and redistribute data without discrimination. The last condition is, in the same time, the aim of open data: *interoperability*. Apparently technical, this condition denotes what is at stake with open data, the ability to inter-operate between persons and organizations without discrimination in the common purpose of providing coherent informational systems. Interoperability is the key of openness and the only way to prevent a chaotic Tower of Babel (“What Is Open Data? – Open Data Handbook” 2012), or, to put it simply, to prevent the risk of breaking down communication and the ability of cooperation in building products or services based on data.

In fact, public statements of NGOs, activists and state representatives – sometimes called, in an avant-garde fashion, *Manifesto(s)* – contain the

definitional basis of different informational movements in the contemporary world; the open data movement makes no difference. We make institutions – seen as bundles or clusters of rules – by words and grant use a meaning. The Sebastopol (California) conference in 2007 of tech-enthusiasts, tech-savvies and (cyber)activists produced 8 principles for how to use open data by governments the governments should provide and use open data (Collective 2007). Some of them are of chief interest for my philosophical analysis.

The first four principles state that data must be complete, primary, timely, and accessible. The desiderate of *completeness* converges with the demand of pure quality or “the highest possible level of granularity, not in aggregate or modified forms” (Collective 2007). Therefore, data is not open unless it is of *primary sources directly accessible*, that is, “available on the internet” and automatically collected (by a machine). The most important principle, in my opinion, is to reasonably structure data in order to allow *automated processing*; one key of open data is its capability of being processed in an automatic way by different software and applications. Here lies the difference between statistical data and open data: the former is already found in an aggregated manner, the latter is open to any inquiry and composition of inputs for diverse pattern discovering algorithms. This kind of data doesn’t have a purpose; it stays ready for any investigative or descriptive function. From a legal perspective, this ability can be assured only if there is no discrimination against use or persons provided by means of anonymity and if “data is available in a format over which no entity has exclusive control” (Collective 2007). To summarize, we need completeness, direct access, automated processing, anonymity, non-discriminatory participation and lack of private property to actually ensure data openness.

Examples of open data are abundant – in principle, any sort of data can be made open. With just one exception: personal data that is placed under the constraints of privacy. Demographic data, financial data (on taxation or public spending and budgets), political and legal data (about laws, Parliamentary activity or court sentences), geographical, geophysical and geo-location data (e.g. the GPS system), data about energy consumption and economic activities, data about public schools, public transport or public venues, data about the quality of air, water and urban life, educational open data, etc. are just a fraction of endless possible cases.

Open Public Data as Commons

Today, attention is focused on open data partly because their alleged usefulness in public affairs and public policies. But it firstly emerged in the scientific world; the campaign in favor of open scientific data is much older than the contemporary political movement. At the end of 1950 a World Data Center system for geophysical data and research was established, marking the beginning of a beautiful practice in which many different projects were enrolled. Some of them are seen as the greatest achievements of the scientific world: big datasets of human genome, the Open Consortium on geospatial data or the launch of Science Commons (“Open Science Data” 2015). Their magnitude in biological, genomics, energy, disease or spatial research is increasing year by year. Beyond any doubt, open scientific data is the first kind of data as commons. It was argued that the release of scientific data in the public domain, directly by academic journals or by using general disciplinary repositories, is the “social contract of scientific publishing” (Vision 2010, 330), a binding condition for science to accomplish its epistemic ends through reproducibility and to ensure the sustainability of research on the long run by means of reuse (Parr 2007, 309). For somebody educated in the sociology of science, this attitude echoes Mertonianism.

I suppose that the distinction between private and public goods is well known, hence my endeavor is to explain why the best way to understand open data in a political fashion is to conceive them as public commons. The distinction was born in the natural rights tradition of political thought which begun with John Locke. It is difficult to exclude somebody from a public good and any of its uses cannot reduce the availability to others, that is, a public good is both non-excludable and non-rivalrous. A useful piece of knowledge, the air or the sunsets are public goods (Hess and Ostrom 2007, 7–10). It is also hard to exclude from a common-pool resource, *e.g.* a library or a forest, but the difference resides in its high subtractability. Data, in a digital format, has the characteristics of public goods. Datasets, understood as resources which have to be maintained (in a repository), should be conceived as a common-pool resource. Free riding and the collective action problem are unavoidable in this case (Hess and Ostrom 2007, 10–12). Knowledge based on data is cumulative and impossible to keep locked; moreover, it has a huge cost of realization, that is, the price to pay when cooperation and collaboration of some are done for the benefits of many.

This structural analysis must be somehow doubled by an institutional one. Stating the structural form of open data is necessary but it is not sufficient

for the sake of explaining how the system works. Hence, the public commons research focuses on production, preservation and growth; in short it targets the governance of commons. Ostrom and Hess (2007, 41-44, 46-48) tailor the institutional analysis and development (IAD), originally constructed for the common pool of natural resources, to knowledge *commons* or knowledge *shared* resources. They start from the observation that when a new technology is introduced in relationship to natural resources many phenomena can occur: “overharvesting, congestion, rivalry, and possibly even depletion” (Ostrom and Hess 2007, 47); in the case of information technology it is possible to witness some of them, especially congestion, rivalry and depletion for databases and datasets artifacts.

The IAD model recognizes in the game of the governance of the resources not only their biophysical characteristics, but also the *attributes of the community* and the *rules-in-use*. A small, homogenous community is more eager to produce and maintain a resource, but a complex one, like the “digital knowledge community” is of a total different nature and it faces huge challenges mainly because of its multilayered structure – its members are sometimes unrecognizable, there are different types of users, providers and policymakers (Ostrom and Hess 2007, 49). The rules-in-use are split in three main categories: operative, collective-choice and constitutive rules. People make day-by-day decisions; they interact in the light or in search of (better) policies and on the constitutional level are the rules that “define who must, may, or must not participate in making collective choices” (Ostrom and Hess 2007, 50).

The rules-in-use for open data community were presented in the first section. It is worthy to observe that the three ranks of rules are intermingled in an effort to keep participation high on each level, not only in particular decisions, *i.e.* which dataset to provide, but also at a constitutional (or rules-definitional) one. Let me now analyze the attributes of this global community movement, its action arena – situations and actors –, patterns of interaction and outcomes as they are understood by Ostrom and Hess (2007), but in a more freely fashion than the standard IAD.

Open Data Movement. Facts and Its Value

Even if the term “open data” was coined in 1995 (Chignard 2013), the movement of open data took wings in the last ten years. The international conference held in Sebastopol in December 2007 on open government data produced not only the 8 principles explained in the first section, but also a network of activists and policymakers (Collective 2007). As the lector will

surely agree, two main actors of this movement are Open Knowledge Foundation and Creative Commons, global non-profit organizations focused on the knowledge commons. Both of them maintain the rules-in-use. The European Union has a strong commitment to open public data, but also India, United States, United Kingdom or France. Many global non-profit organizations, international institutions, like the World Bank and the United Nations, and corporations¹ open their data to public scrutiny and to civic or economic reuse.

It is worth to look at data about open data. A data-visualization (or illustrated map) of this movement can facilitate the “big picture” from the point of view of different application programming interfaces (APIs) that keep alive the arena of data transfer. Beginning 2006, NGOs, companies, and states released their data using APIs to facilitate their dissemination. Until 2011, 4000 APIs were in function allowing programmers to build upon them new applications and uses (Visual.ly 2011). This growth is exponential.

We can measure the complexity of the arena of the open data movement via two online applications that manage to keep together, in an accessible and easy to find and search manner, open datasets of government or public affairs. Dataportlas.org is claimed to be the most comprehensive list of open data portals, launched in 2011 in Berlin; it is a curatorial work maintained by experts in data, curators from local, regional and national governments, international organizations and several NGOs (Open Knowledge Foundation 2011). Until now it provides information and access to 390 portals around the world. The vast majority of them are located in the US and Europe.

More interesting, in my opinion, is the Open Data Index that “measures and benchmarks the openness of data around the world” (“Open Data Index - Open Knowledge” 2014). Its purpose is to track the state of governmental open data, mainly to ensure that the data is released in an accessible way for citizens, media, and civil society. In 2014, 97 countries were indexed on different criteria, *i.e.* kind of datasets – maps, election results, government budget and spending, legislation or national statistics. Unsurprisingly, United Kingdom is ranked first, with 97% openness, followed by Denmark, France, Finland, and Australia with less than 90%. The correlation with the democracy index is evident – the most democratic states open their data for public inspection faster and better than the others. Surprisingly, Romania is on the 16th position with

¹ The largest worldwide open database of companies claims that it can search between 84,637,710 companies and their public data provided by the company itself or by governments (“OpenCorporates: The Open Database Of The Corporate World” 2015). It covers almost all jurisdictions in the world.

64% openness (Voicu 2014), in front of other countries with better democratic prospects, like Japan, Austria, Canada or Switzerland. This unexpected result is due to the fact that Romania has a good national map freely accessible online and also its election results. What really matters for citizens and civil society is still not (entirely) open: government budget and spending, legislation and national statistics (“Open Data Index - Open Knowledge” 2014).²

In principle, everyone can produce open data. As I stated before, the European Union (EU) is one of the greatest providers and rulers in the field of public data. Its strong commitment has both civic and economic reasons and is equally captured by legislative and non-legislative measures. Since the end of 2003, and revised in 2013, EU has a Directive on the re-use of public sector information (Directive 2003/98/EC, known as the “PSI Directive”); the Directive is concentrated on the economic aspects of the public re-use of information, citizen’s access to information being less important (European Commission 2014). Two of the major points of the directive are the non-discrimination and non-exclusion principles: it is prohibited to make exclusive arrangements with individuals or organizations at the expense of others (European Commission 2014). Until now on the EU official portal 8279 datasets are available on different subjects, from politics and economics to science, social questions and environment (“European Union Open Data Portal” 2015).

The World Bank is another big provider of open data by offering “free access to data about development in countries around the globe” (“Data | The World Bank” 2014). One can browse data by country, topic or indicator. It also proposes a toolkit for open government data to be used by any state that works with the Bank.

First thing one can observe is that the community of open data enthusiasts is a resource by itself, as Ostrom and Hess pointed in their study (2007, 50). The community is complex and its actors have diverse interests. A large focus is put on the public spending of money by governments and sometimes this is seen as the most secure way to monitor public investments but

² This kind of ranking could be bothersome because it puts on the same level timetable transport data and government spending data; it can bring to unexpected results, as in Romanian case.

Still, the availability of data makes possible to correct such “false positives”. Looking deeper than the national level we can compare, for example, Paris and Bucharest. Paris has a total score of 630 points and Bucharest, the capital of Romania, only 210 (“Open Data Census – Meta” 2014).

also corruption. OpenSpending.org is such a tool to track and monitor “how governments spend money in our name”; it has indexed 73 countries with 932 datasets (Open Knowledge Foundation 2014).

A second observation concerns the global feature of this movement. Driven by enthusiasts, activists and policymakers from the Western world, the open data movement goes through the whole global political landscape. Like any other technological promise, its outcomes or consequences are brought into play as sufficient reasons for pursuing it. In the next part of my inquiry I question not the results, or the outcomes, but its main claim: open public and government data helps to better understand and control the political game, fosters analysis, deliberation and political participation.

Freedom of Information as a New Ideology of Liberation

Central to my research is open public data provided by states through their Parliaments and governmental institutions. This section indirectly interrogates the rules-in-use more than the quality of the resources – the datasets – in their task to accomplish what is claimed about open data. Behind the rules, as always, there is a set of political beliefs and an ideology. What ideology informs the constitutional level of rules in the movement of open data? The answer is crystal clear: freedom of information, with a twist – “Information wants to be free!”

After the World War II, state governments began to collect large amounts of data from citizens and this move was matched by an increasing production of information by different state institutions. In the same time, in Western industrialized democracies rose legitimate expectations about openness and transparency in government that gave birth to an expansion of freedom of information (FOI) laws (Cain et al. 2003, 115). The necessity of these FOI laws is beyond any doubt, but one question remains problematic: in fact, how much information do citizens need (Cain et al. 2003, 115)? Information has a cost of production and dissemination, and, on the other hand, a price to pay by the receiver, the agent that needs information for political purposes. It is widely accepted that information is critical for a meaningful citizen participation, but, and here is its Achilles’ heel, there are no incentives for citizens to be informed, mostly because the cost of action and collective action is high. FOI laws are a palliative for the lack of citizen’s participation and engagement in public affairs, not a cure. Even though, FOI laws guarantee an acceptable degree of transparency useful for groups or NGOs ready to pay the cost of action in state

interpellation. This imbalance in interactions with the state is based on disparities in access, disparities “that reflect social privilege” (Johnson 2014, 3).

One can have two views on the modern citizen: the minimalist one – citizens don’t need so much information, they rely upon digested information offered by media, friends, opinionators – and the deliberative counterpart – each new piece of information (from external inputs or produced in the deliberation activity) is vital for gaining nuances and details in the pursuit of truth (Cain et al. 2003, 115–16). The first vision of the citizen seems to be a realistic account of what is really happening. But, the reader might ask, don’t we live in an internet era where the abundance of information and forums of debate, from online groups to social media, is the norm? In fact, the world wide web intensified the propagation of various interest groups that dominate the debate and monopolize the flow of information from governments to public and citizens (Hoven 2005, 52). The layman citizen is not involved at all, she “keeps a distance” from the public arena, being informed in a briefly manner by the monitoring NGOs and investigation journalists, hence one cannot see a real connection between the boost in political information and political engagement (Hoven 2005, 52). The asymmetry of information is mirrored by an asymmetry of engagement.

Why do governments and parliaments want us to know (Cain et al. 2003, 116)? For the sake of pure knowledge or rather because they have their own agenda in which citizens, NGOs and media could be trapped? The answer is not as simple as a naïve citizen would like. For sure, democratic governments need a *monitorial citizen* (Hoven 2005) to keep an eye on the bureaucratic mechanism. But keeping her occupied with informational investigation of trivial issues, like the public spending of a local mayor or the observation of transport time tables, the government ensures its own daily peace in pursuing greater actions undisturbed by the citizens, like big contracts and national affairs. Internet is not a trigger for political involvement or participation, it rather facilitates access to information and may perhaps raise the receptiveness of the government to the citizen (Hoven 2005, 53).

I invite the reader to move into the action arena of open data movement. “Information wants to be free!” is a slogan of all around the internet, proposed by information activists. It is used as a critique of intellectual property and monopoly with the purpose of liberating knowledge and culture from the hands of so-called greedy corporations. The catchphrase was personalized by the open data movement: data wants to be free because this is a requirement of democratic engagement. Open data movement is, in a way, similar to many new

political movements emerged at the end of the XXth century, *e.g.* the ecologist, feminist or LGBT interest groups. It faces the same dilemma: to stay in a niche having an agenda built only for specific issues, *e.g.* monitoring the public budget, or to practice a more comprehensive approach of the general politics (Uszkai and Vică 2012)?

“Freedom of information” ideology is juxtaposed with a strong belief that social liberation can be achieved through technology, especially information technology. One that participated in a *hackaton* – the gatherings of data enthusiasts for the purpose of hacking new datasets and building new applications on them – can observe a general tendency of believing that structural political problems can be resolved by technological solutions (Gordon-McKeon 2013; Kitchin 2013). They belong to a particular class of young, educated and tech-oriented citizens which are not representative at all for society as a whole; their findings and interests are driven by their social position and they lack a deep contextual knowledge of the social and political issues at stake in a democracy (Gordon-McKeon 2013; Kitchin 2013). Organized as volunteer packs without a national or global coordination, open data enthusiasts produce a lot of datasets

lacking the qualities expected in a well organized and run data infrastructure such as clean, high quality, validated and interoperable data that comply with data standards and have appropriate metadata and full record sets (associated documentation); preservation, backup and auditing policies; re-use, privacy and ethics policies; administrative arrangements, management organization and governance mechanisms; and financial stability and a long term plan of development and sustainability. (Kitchin 2013)

In a word, enthusiasm and quality are soon parted; it produces messy datasets and projects without a sustainable future. As the reader will see in the next sections, datasets by themselves are useless without powerful tools, models and other materials compulsory for data analysis (Kitchin 2013). Freedom of information is a principle to start with, but in order to realize and implement it open data enthusiasts need more than volunteer work. They should, as rational actors on this political arena, understand where is the crux of the democracy problem, that is, engagement, deliberation and participation, and to question their own ideology of liberation by the means of technology.

Open Data and Open Government. From Contestation to Delusion

Improving democracy is not an easy task. In the first place, it's essential to discover the assumptions and suppositions that underlie the democratic process one envisages to improve. Democracy has a long track in the history of ideas and divergent conceptions sustain its goals, for this reason each step forward in improvement is more than an interpretation, it is a reconstruction of its foundations. The liberal or the communitarian foundations are disintegrating in our contemporary times, being too loose or too demanding for accepting them as starting points for e-democracy (Hoven 2005, 50-3) or open government development. Using Philip Pettit modern account of Republicanism, where democratic freedom is understood as avoiding domination by powerful and arbitrary political bodies, Hoven (2005, 55, 57) proposes a new basis for open government: the *contestatory* e-democracy. This kind of democratic model is partly possible due to freedom of information and even open data, but it is not sufficient: the citizen needs to be more than a monitorial apparatus, she needs to enter a real agora or forum where the relevant issues and decisions are questioned (Hoven 2005, 56). Each individual must have an influential voice to sustain arguments in favor or against collective actions; she has to be most of the time vigilant, not necessarily well-informed or unbiased (Hoven 2005, 57). For this purpose information is paramount because it offers the source of beliefs and opinions and the milieu of the monitoring activity. In this sense, without contestation, neither deliberation, nor participation is achievable.

The open data movement is not contesting governmental decisions; in fact, it assumes and claims *neutrality* – data are just means for any purpose – and many NGOs and activists work together with governments to build and release the datasets. This brings the question of what kind of data is open to public and if governments are keen to provide sensitive information that could offer reasons for political contestation. The idea of neutrality is hurting the project of openness: data is not a “neutral reflection of reality”, it is constructed by actors – members of civil society or civil servants – by embedding their social assumptions and worldviews in it (Johnson 2014, 2). Data is a result of design choices reflecting values, principles and aims of the actors-architects of this political movement (Johnson 2014, 4), hence its supposed neutrality is a myth.

Enhancing citizen's access is not implying a certain use of data, opportunity is not realization (Gurstein 2011); like its claimed neutrality, potential citizen enhancement by data is not actualized by necessity in the political exercise of monitoring and contestation. Indeed, we live in a world of *digital divides* between informational rich and informational poor and open data makes no exception; more than that, even if one has the access to data offered by

government portals, she also needs to dispose of different resources and tools – time, language and technical skills, software and applications, and an understanding of statistical and mathematical models – for the sake of interpreting data and producing reliable knowledge (Gurstein 2011). It seems that citizen enhancement by open data is also a fairytale.

Let me go back to the axiological analysis: open data faces a huge problem, that is, the conflict of values. Trust, transparency, privacy and security are at odds, but they have to be associated in a coherent approach for the purpose of producing public value in the use of data (Meijer et al. 2013, 329). Information overload produced by massive amounts of data can in fact reduce transparency, and public trust could be lowered by the continuous re-use and re-contextualization of data (Meijer et al. 2013, 333).

A fundamental question to ask is how open data will bring forth the *open government*. Firstly, it is not clear why opening data will logically transform governments in open systems (Janssen et al. 2012, 260-1). An open system lays on feedback capabilities which until now are more declarative than effective. Secondly, the simple matter of publishing data is not producing by itself open governments, thus the actors of this political movement should get rid of the idealistic view that favors open data as a crucial tool for democratic decisions (Janssen et al. 2012, 268). Does open data enlarge the scope of citizen's participation in taking decisions and orientating policies (Davies and Bawa 2012) to the extent of creating government as an open system? Maybe it is better to keep the two issues separated: open data is technical in nature, open government is an ideal of transparency and change toward a more inclusive game of politics (Martin et al. 2013).

At this point, before proceeding with my own critical philosophical approach to open data, it is useful to introduce the concept of “datafication” (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier 2013, 73-97). Datafication is happening worldwide at an exponential growth, like its complement, digitization. Unlike digitization, which is a process of converting analog information into binary code, “to datafy a phenomenon is to put it in a quantified format so it can be tabulated and analyzed” (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier 2013, 78). Datafication is a sufficient condition for infinite analyses in an “endless stream” (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier 2013, 84). Any kind of information could be turned into data and therefore aggregated to reveal different patterns and configurations (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier 2013, 86). Information about words, sentences and phrases, information about actions and places, events and spaces could be datafied, thus becoming open to any exploitation. This brings an incredible amount of data, a deluge of possibilities. From deluge and information overload to delusion is only one step. The next sections will argue

that the risk of delusion is present but it is avoidable if we set conditions for open (government) data to produce reliable knowledge.

Epistemic Competence and Data-Driven Deliberative Democracy

The following inquiry inscribes itself in the large framework of epistemic and deliberative democracy. It assumes an ideal conception and theory of democracy as its guiding principles. The reader will also see my commitment for an information-theoretic account of knowledge next to my reliance on contemporary epistemological conceptions that bear the origin of knowledge in data and information.

The first reason behind an inclusive, deliberative democracy is that any citizen can make use of her *epistemic competence* and to have this competence means to know something or to possess a certain kind of knowledge (Landmore 2011, 9-11). For example, I (barely) know something about the check and balances mechanism in a democracy; you have a certain kind of knowledge when it comes to explaining how the legislative works; and so on. Our epistemic competence is not “mere possession of information” (Landmore 2011, 9) but nonetheless it needs information in order to form and exercise itself. One’s epistemic competence is singular, but not alone – and here resides the inclusive conception of epistemic deliberative democracy: we are not only acquiring competences, we put them together in the collective process of deliberation. Democracy is the exercise of “distributed collective intelligence of the people” (Landmore 2011, 6), in which institutions must be able to gather and process the information (Landmore 2011, 10). Deliberation is a meta-institution since it legitimates any other further voting or ruling.

“Information is raw data about political facts that citizens are supposed to need in order to form enlightened judgments” correctly assumes Landmore (2011, 9). But the level of individual information is not important. What really matters is the *collective* level of information, secured by a mechanism for data aggregation and processing into reliable information, and the information produced within the debate.

The claim of open data movement is that data fosters political engagement and participation, enriches debate, helps citizens and representatives to deliberate and improves government, ruling and policies. One of its presuppositions is that data will better inform citizens about political facts and will support better judgments both on the individual and collective levels. Let me question the claim from an epistemic democracy optic.

a. Is it relevant how many data citizens acquire to make a decision?

No, the aggregation and the deliberative process will produce without doubt new insights. Definitely, it is crucial how many citizens meet and participate for the sake of the deliberation. A bigger group is doing better in producing outcomes from deliberation than a small group of average persons. So, maybe the question is how to ensure equilibrium between how many deliberators and how many useful data they need. A big group of zero-informed deliberators will hardly get to track the truth by deliberation, but in an equal manner an information-overloaded small group trying to access all relevant data is exposed to messiness and erratic cognitive behavior. The cognitive diversity of deliberators (Landmore 2011) is the key to promote a relevant group outcome: the ignorant and the highly documented citizen, the radical and the conservative one, the political-savvy and the naïve should be put together. Increasing datafication will not work if we don't diversify data about political facts.

b. Does open data enhance the citizen's epistemic competence?

Yes, but only under the condition of well-formed data producing meaningful information. Having political beliefs and opinions based on data about facts is enhancing the ability to make clued-up proposals on a specific issue. Remember that for an epistemic conception of democracy the individual level of information which is presumed as functional is not essential, that is, one must accept that any belief or opinion, justified or unjustified, are worthy to take into account. Therefore we have to look at the collective level.

c. Does open data enhance epistemic competence of the group?

Yes, but only under some assumptions that will be approximated in the next section.

d. What is the role that open data plays in the deliberative process?

Above all, data is useful to gain and expand trust between people involved in debates. They will have a common point of reference and a universal accessible piece of information. But, as we saw in the previous sections, the neutrality of open data is a widespread misconception, therefore the "common point" is actually inherently biased.

Accepting the open data movement claim implies accepting a somehow relevant relationship between data and deliberative decisions in a shared political life. This relation can be either a function, or a causal relationship, or a simple statistical correlation. There is no clear correlation between accessible open data in a democracy and its inclusive and deliberative practices or, at least, we don't possess sufficient data (pun intended) to prove it.

The question of the causal relationship between open data and democratic decision is a different theoretical problem. I propose to imagine the distance from data to decision as a chain of causal relationships and areas of supervenience. Information supervenes on data, that is, information properties

supervene on the lower level of data properties. Any change in data properties will lead to a change in information properties. Until now it's clear why information is influenced by data. Yet is the relationship between information and individual epistemic competence also of a supervenient nature? Will a change in information properties provoke an isomorphous change in the use and outputs of this competence? Does information solely produces simple, justificatory or justified beliefs? It seems problematic to simply suppose so and go forth. In a way, our imaginary causal chain is broken close to its beginning. The road from individual epistemic competence to the collective level where all informational content, from data, beliefs, and opinions to theoretical knowledge, is aggregated and interpreted in the pursuit of a decision that is shady and hard to map. The emergence of a collective decision is a complex phenomenon inside which multiple forces are causally effective. History is rich in political decisions taken against any evidence and neither of them too correct. One can be right even if one lacks or doesn't care about information and data.

One intermediate conclusion I draw is that between data and political decisions there is no causal direct relationship. Data is not of vital importance *in* the melting pot of deliberation; however it allows *a better grounding* for the deliberative activity because it maintains a good prospect for questioning and criticizing various political beliefs and attitudes.

An Epistemological Critical Vision of Open Data

Supra, I used the expression “shared political life”. This is more than making policies or state politics; it is the political *Lebenswelt* (Lifeworld) each citizen is aware of it even she is not involved. We have data and information about political facts, we develop theories because we acquire knowledge, we monitor and observe government, we follow conspiracies or apply logical tests to recognize power and authority, we believe and argue; in a word, we are immersed in this political *Lebenswelt* making use of our epistemic competence. “Politics is elsewhere” is a statement one surely encountered; it can have different meanings: “Politics never goes public; it is the job of powerful elite”, “Politics is so complex that it can't be grasped”, “Politics is cryptic and slipping”, etc. I endorse the second meaning: politics is elsewhere, not in the data. And now I am talking about real politics in a representative democracy.

Let me begin with an observation: legislative or governmental open data³ are not as *linked* as we may expect. From the data corpus we are not able

³ Until now I presented just government data. A good example of legislative open data is to be found in a Sciences Po application and datasets on the French legislative process (La

to extract the topology of the relations (and affiliations) network between Members of Parliament (MPs), lobby groups and MPs, NGOs and MPs, MPs and ministers, state institutions and local administration etc. A good mapping of those relations could bring new insights into the unofficial relations between political actors (“the hidden part of politics”) and could help with the monitoring of more than administrative issues. But for this mapping we need investigative data journalism. However, we can assume that this network of relations is a scale-free network with some central hubs and authorities, doubled by a small world topology. You can reach any node of the network in only a few steps.

The first problem when working with data is how to choose the “representative samples” for analysis (Boyd 2010): data in itself cannot offer answers. The citizens researching it have to know what they are looking for. For this reason real scientists advance a hypothesis, construct a model and test it (or, in Popperian terms, they look for falsification). In rejecting this methodology the open data enthusiasts would lose control and replication possibility. The second point is that even though they use applied mathematics to extract “knowledge” from data, they can’t make predictions since prediction is a mirrored image of the explanation and the explanation cannot be model-free.

It is time to question if, under the current ways of presenting open, especially legislative data, is it possible to predict future behavior of MPs and political groups and if based on this prediction it is possible to extend the conclusions to the expected future evolution of the law in different policy areas. The answer, in my opinion, is negative. The open data movement lacks a mature scientific methodology (hypothesis-model-testing) in interpreting results (the expected output). That is why it carries on the descriptive level with soft correlations. But open data does have scientific virtues: the openness (which implies the possibility of replication) and the interplay between reductionism and the holistic view. Upon those virtues it’s possible to build models capable of prediction. A reliable predictive model is a condition for open data to generate political understanding and innovation.

Open data is not raw data, but well-formed data. Knowledge, from a contemporary epistemological perspective, is acquired through true meaningful semantic well-formed data, *i.e.* information (Floridi 2005; Floridi 2009). It is impossible to jump from data to knowledge without conceptualizing and structuring the former. This implies (1) a semantic level of data aggregation, *e.g.* the analysis application where the data makes sense for the viewer, and also (2)

Fabrique de la Loi 2014). The citizen can monitor the evolution of the law in the course of parliamentary procedure.

a test of logical validity. A reliable predictive model is a condition for open data to generate understanding of political life and to foster engagement.

(1) Data aggregation can be tricky: data is a form of reductionism applied to a complex reality, *i.e.* the “shared political life”. From data aggregation emerges a meaning unseen before of the complex reality or just new properties of it? We are stuck in the classical debate about emergence: is it happening on the epistemological level – we know something new – or on the ontological level – the “shared political life” has new properties generated by data? The puzzle is amplified by two other problems: the relevance and the usefulness of data.

(2) What kind of epistemological object is an open database? In our case (government or legislative open data) the object is built under the open world assumption, that is, *a.* if we don’t know something, we don’t attribute by default the value “false” – simply because the system is daily updated with new information, *b.* the system is always inconsistent, and *c.* it is impossible to have complete knowledge.

From the conjunction of (1) and (2) we have to infer the following statement: “Not always open government or legislative data will generate knowledge.” Our task is to find the situations when knowledge is possible and focus on them.

A second intermediary conclusion: making sense of open data is a two-fold challenge because we equally need to find models of explanation and prediction and to establish the limits of aggregation in meaningful units or clusters. Open data could not approximate the complexity of *politics* but can provide us knowledge about *policies*.

Instead of Conclusions

I didn’t want to throw the cat among the pigeons, but to reveal the emperor’s new clothes: transparency and openness.

Open data availability is growing year by year. For sure, newer and newer applications based on scientific models will find meaning and offer reliable information for investing our political beliefs and collective political body with powerful and truthful content. The potential of open data is huge, but it is important to recognize its actual limits, inherently natural or imposed by the aggregative mechanism of democracy.

To datafy all facts from the shared political life is in fact both impossible and unnecessary. Firstly, datafication is not neutral reduction; it is

driven by values, opportunities and ideology. Then, even complete datafication doesn't lead to awareness and knowledge by its simple presence.

Open data is a form of citizen empowerment, but for what purpose? The first answer that comes to mind is the activity of monitoring government and the legislative process. Does it have a role in deliberation? Deliberation, seen as a way of providing epistemic grounds for democracy, is a complex process and we need to focus on the institutional design of the collective aggregation of information and its blossoming as knowledge. Even though, deliberation is not government yet. The monitorial citizen could be a vocal contestator or a person that reasoned and indulged herself in constructivist political debates. But this kind of citizen is an ideal one. In an old-school representative democracy the simple existence of open data doesn't directly encourage someone into political engagement.

Looking for technological cures for political issues could be like the song of the sirens. It attracts a lot of brilliant minds and good willing people from the real shared political life promising eternal enjoyment and liberation. The shared political life is the ship we steer. Open data can be at most one of its resources, but not its compass.

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A Critique of Intellectual Property Globalization: Libertarian and Rawlsian Arguments*

Radu Uszkai

Introduction

Between libertarians and Rawlsian liberals there seems to be, at least on a wide array of essential topics, significant disagreement. While political and moral philosophers such as Nozick argue, in the classical liberal/libertarian tradition, that only a minimal (night-watchmen) state is ethically defensible with the free-market taking care of the rest, from health care to education (Nozick 1974), high liberals which dwell on the Rawlsian requirements for fairness as a requirement for a theory of justice consider that we need a “substantive conception of equality, requiring that goods be distributed in a way that benefits the least fortunate” (Tomasi 2012, 51). Is this antagonism absolute? Is there a possibility that classical liberal/libertarian arguments might overlap with Rawlsian ones?

The aim of the present study is that of tackling this issue by having, as a case study, the problem of Intellectual Property in a global context. To state it more precisely, I wish to explore whether libertarians and Rawlsian liberals might agree on two interrelated topics:

- (i) Is IP morally defensible?
- (ii) As a corollary of (i), is the globalization of IP morally and economically defensible/desirable?

Last, and more importantly not least, I also wish to elaborate on the possible implications of (i) and (ii):

- (iii) Is there a further development of the two separate arguments regarding IP and globalization possible? Could there be such a thing as a “bleeding heart libertarian” (BHL)” (Dawson 2014, 378)

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perspective on copyrights and patents possible, as a perspective which stresses out the importance of free markets and social justice?

The path I will follow in my study could be broken down into the following sequence of steps. First of all, I wish to present the current state of affairs regarding IP at a global level, highlighting the seminal role which the TRIPS agreement had and analyzing it in a historical perspective. Afterwards, I will present some of the most important justifications for copyrights and patents, with a focus on Lockean/natural rights and utilitarian/consequentialist arguments. Thirdly, I will reconstruct a libertarian critique of IP, followed by a similar task but in a Rawlsian fashion. Last but not least, I will end my study with an emphasis on the wider implications of my study with regards to libertarianism and Rawlsian (high) liberalism.

A Brief History of IP. How Did Copyrights and Patents Become a Global Issue?

From a historical perspective, copyrights and patents (or other IP rights, for that matter¹) have not been around for so much time. For the Ancient Greeks such as Plato, a copyright in your expressed idea would have been complete nonsense. Take his epistemology, for example: knowledge was not seen as a product of the mind of an individual, but just the result of a process which he coined “anamnesis”. There was no modern or contemporary notion of an author as a producer of ideas (Hesse 2002, 26-27). With minor adjustments, the same was true for what historians still call, nowadays, the Middle Age. Even though a book market was emerging and scientific research was starting off, there was still no sign of property rights in ideas. For this phenomenon to occur, a cultural revolution was necessary. And that cultural revolution took place during the late Early Modern/Enlightenment period:

The concept of intellectual property – the idea that an idea can be owned – is a child of the European Enlightenment. It was only when people began to believe that knowledge came from the

¹ Traditionally, copyrights and patents have been considered as morally problematic. Moral philosophers have not seen, at least up to this point, trademarks or trade secrets as ethically engaging. For a thorough presentation of all this four types of IP rights see Kinsella (2001, 3-7).

human mind working upon the senses – rather than through divine revelation, assisted by the study of ancient texts – that it became possible to imagine humans as creators, and hence owners, of new ideas rather than as mere transmitters of eternal verities. (Hesse 2002, 26)

If we ask how and why did this particular cultural revolution took place when it did, I consider that technology might provide us with a tentative answer. To be more precise, I have in mind the impact that Gutenberg's invention had on this cultural paradigm shift with regards to what it is like to be an author. Starting from the 15th century, books were easier to be published, because the costs associated to this process were significantly lower. Lower costs meant a higher availability of this product to a growing number of individuals. If we take into consideration the economical revolution which took place in that period of time (the emergence of bourgeois capitalism and the advancement of the free market) it is no surprise that a booming book market was an ubiquitous phenomenon. More and more people (the majority of them from the middle class) started reading literature. This brought about an essential transition in the incentive structure for publishers or authors: being an active agent in the book market became a lucrative affair.

It is in this context that the first rights which we might associate with what we presently label IP appeared. Traditionally, the so-called “Venetian moment” from the 15th century is considered the birth of Intellectual Property (May & Sell 2006, 58). From this point on, other European kingdoms and countries started adopting similar types of legislation which offered authors, inventors, composers, musicians or researchers a “privilege”, “monopoly” or a “patent” in their ideas, with England being an interesting case study (Johnson 2011).

Prior to the beginning of the 20th century the adoption of IP laws has been, more or less, and endogenous phenomenon. Copyrights and patents reached an almost universal status, but it wasn't until the adoption of TRIPS (the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement) in 1994 that IP really became a global issue (Sell 2003). Exogenous factors, such as the benefit of being a member of the WTO (World Trade Organization) brought about a level of compliance from almost all the countries in the world. To put it in another way, the globalization of IP can be tied to this particular moment in history. From the USA to Romania and from South Africa to Sweden, all countries are bound by law to respect this international agreement regarding copyrights and patents.

Up to this point I have focused, in my analysis, on a descriptive task. Is there however a normative element in this process of globalizing IP? In other words, should artists, researchers and inventors benefit from such a property right in relation to an immaterial, ideal object? By framing the question like this, the appeal to ethics seems unavoidable.

IP as a Moral Right: Some Key Ethical Assumptions and Elements

The moral debate surrounding the status of Intellectual Property rights predates the contemporary interest surrounding this topic. As a series of commentators suggest, the origins of this debate could be placed, as in the case of the origin of IP, in the Enlightenment period (Chartier 2002; Hesse 1990), in the midst of a heated exchange of ideas between Diderot and Condorcet. While the former argued in favor of the right of an author as being intrinsically linked to his personality and a result of desert based considerations, the latter tackled the issue in a consequentialist fashion: if editors or authors have a monopoly on the publishing process, the Enlightenment ideal of the accumulation of knowledge becomes a futile endeavor.

A useful map of the contemporary debate regarding IP as a moral right could be found in Menell (2000). By maintaining his analysis at the level of philosophical presuppositions, he considers that an appropriate distinction is in place: that between utilitarian/economical arguments, on the one hand, and non-utilitarian, on the other. An all encompassing presentation of all this argumentative strategies would definitely be outside the scope of the present study. As a consequence, I will focus in this section only on the two prevalent theories in favor of copyrights and patents, namely on the the utilitarian/consequentialist and Lockean one².

Contemporary Lockean theorists who argue in favor of IP focus primarily on the importance of self-ownership and labor as a mechanism for granting a property right to ideas. Their starting point is Locke's contention that God gave us all the objects in common but also a property right in our own beings. As a consequence, an individual also has a legitimate claim, Lockeans argue, on her labor and, by extension, to the fruits of her labor (Locke 1988[1689], 287-288). Locke uses as examples physical objects, such as apples or acorns. Is this perspective suitable for immaterial objects such as a formula

² Some of the following ideas have been earlier presented in Cernea and Uszkai (2012), Uszkai (2014), Socaciu and Uszkai (2015).

for a new pharmaceutical drug, or the ideas behind a fantasy novel? Some answer in a positive manner. Take the Lockean claim that labor plays a fundamental role in the process of appropriation. Does it really matter that Locke had in mind only physical labor? For Spinello this is not a real issue. What matters, he asserts, is the fact that an individual mixes his or her labor (physical or mental) with a previously owned object, either material or immaterial:

Mental labor is no different from physical labor: both are extensions of the person and belong to the person. It's certainly logical that a person who expends intellectual labor to write a book or create a work of art has a presumptive claim to the ownership and control of the fruits of her labor. (Spinello 2011, 280)

Why is labor so important for Lockean theorists? Tavani (2009, 89) answers: because labor is considered to be onerous and burdensome. It is no surprise that desert based arguments in favor of IP rest also on the the same Lockean assumption with regards to either physical or mental meaningful activities (Cwik 2014).

Merges (2011) adds another reason why, if someone accepts the Lockean narrative for appropriation of physical objects, than he should accept it also for immaterial ones. His contention is that the objects which Locke refers to, unowned and in the state of nature are similar, structurally, with ideas from the public domain, as long as this process does not violate what Nozick (1974) called "the Lockean proviso".

To sum up, Lockeans derive a property right in ideas as stemming from a previous property right in our own persons. By laboring, we manage to mix something which we own with some unowned object such as an idea from the public domain. What about the utilitarian/consequentialist approach, though? What are the tenets of this argumentative strategy?

Unsurprisingly, IP utilitarians tend to focus on the consequences of a certain legal framework and also on the importance of incentives. Following Spinello (2003, 9), the utilitarian/consequentialist argument could be summed up as follows:

- a) From a utilitarian perspective, we should adopt rules which contribute to the increase of the level of aggregate welfare or happiness;
- b) Copyrights and patents are incentives for authors and inventors because, by giving them a property right in their immaterial products, you give them a chance to earn their living by exercising their intellectual skills;

c) Incentivizing creative individuals leads to an increase in aggregate social welfare;

d) To conclude, IP is justifiable and necessary.

Posner and Landes (2003) expand this argument. They suggest that the answer to the question “should we have IP rights?” should have, as a starting point, an in depth analysis of the structure of costs. To be more precise, they refer to the costs associated with writing a new book or producing a new pharmaceutical drug, but also of the IP legal system. Posner and Landes observe that ideas tend to be difficult and costly to protect, because as immaterial object they have a different structure than a lot of land. Ideas do resemble, from this perspective, with classical public goods, because they are non-rivalrous in consumption and non-excludable. Without the power to exclude creators would not have an incentive to write, produce music or research cutting edge drugs (Posner and Landes 2003, 18). With the costs associated with copying an idea being as lowest as they ever were, in the context of technological evolution, IP plays a pivotal incentivizing role for socially desirable investments associated with ideas. Artificial scarcity, a result of the very existence of an IP system, is a good thing on this ground, they conclude.

What TRIPS or other international agreements do, at a global level, is sanctioning into law such ethical approaches. Are these two perspectives warranted? How would libertarians or Rawlsians answer to this challenges?

Towards a Libertarian Critique of Copyrights, Patents and IP Globalization

Defining what classical liberalism or libertarianism is in political or moral philosophy is beyond the scope of the paper³. What matters is only the general definition and the key assumptions of this approach: the inviolability of individual rights (mainly private property rights), the emphasis put on market rather than state mechanisms and the importance of free trade. Is there, however, a unified libertarian perspective on Intellectual Property?

The answer is negative. Ayn Rand echoes Diderot's treatment of rights in ideas, with her Lockean/desert approach. Why are creators entitled to the ideas they produce? Rand asserts that the simple fact that those ideas are created by individuals is enough for the state to grant them an IP right. In her words, “[t]he

³ An interested reader on this particular topic should check out Brennan 2012.

legal implementation of the base of all property rights: a man's right to the product of his mind" (Rand 1967, 133) .

Robert Nozick (1974) is also in favor of granting creators IP rights. Drawing on Lockean assumptions regarding property rights, his take on copyrights and patents is more flexible than the Randian version. For example, he considers that inventors should, in a minimal state, benefit from a patent, but the duration of such a special property right should be restricted to a definite time frame: how much time would it take for another independent inventor to reach the same scientific or technological breakthrough (Nozick 1974, 182).

Other libertarians or classical liberals are not only skeptical about the possibility of taking IP seriously as a moral right, but explicitly against such a philosophical enterprise. For instance, take Hayek's analysis of property rights in ideas. He observes, as Posner and Landes do, that there is a clear difference between property rights in material goods, in opposition to immaterial goods such as books, opera librettos or chemical formulas for useful drugs. One answer to the problem of incentives, as we saw earlier, was artificial scarcity (through copyrights or patents) as a mean of artificially increasing the market price of an intellectual good. He notes that:

It is not obvious that such forced scarcity is the most effective way to stimulate the human creative process. I doubt whether there exists a single great work of literature which we would not possess had the author been unable to obtain an exclusive copyright for it; it seems to me that the case for copyright must rest almost entirely on the circumstance that such exceedingly useful works as encyclopedias, dictionaries, textbooks and other works of reference could not be produced if, once they existed, they could freely be reproduced. (Hayek 1988, 36-37)

While analyzing the relationship between monopolies and state intervention, Rothbard echoes Friedrich Hayek's skepticism regarding IP. He sees patents as a clear violation of property rights on the market: "[p]atents, therefore, are grants of exclusive monopoly privilege by the State and are invasive of property rights on the market" (Rothbard 2004, 748).

Kinsella (2001) and Palmer (1989; 1990) explore the issue of the moral legitimacy of IP in a libertarian fashion criticizing both Lockean and utilitarian arguments. Kinsella starts his critique of the natural rights theory of IP by revealing that, if we take their arguments seriously, we end up with an ambiguous situation. For instance, even Lockeans will agree that not all ideas

could be protected by a copyright or a patent. Scientific discoveries such as laws of nature or mathematical axioms are not patentable. Isn't this, though, a violation of the Lockean principles for appropriation? Certainly, no one can deny the fact that, working on the Theory of Relativity, Einstein mixed his labor with previously unowned ideas from the public domain. Moreover, "E = mc²" made possible a lot of technological applications, efficient theories or artistic breakthroughs. Shouldn't Einstein's effort and labor be rewarded, in a Lockean perspective, with a property right? Surely distinguishing between patentable and unpatentable discoveries or ideas should be viewed as superfluous if self-ownership and labor are the relevant claims for a property right (Kinsella 2001, 16).

Kinsella also attacks the very tenants of the Lockean theory of IP, the importance of creation, by offering the example of forging a sword (2001, 27). Imagine, he conjectures, that an individual owns a piece of raw metal and that she wants to forge a sword. If she manages to do it, the resulting object will be her property not because she worked and created it, but because she previously owned the raw metal. Now imagine that the person has the same desire, but no raw material and that, by sheer coincidence, you have it. If she goes on to create her sword, than the weapon will not belong to her on the simple ground that she created it, because the raw material was not in her property. Creation, Kinsella sums up, is not the mechanism by which we appropriate exterior objects!

Libertarians (all libertarians, to be more precise) ascribe a fundamental function to private property rights and, in that sense, they view the respect of this right as a sign of a free society. Granting a property right in ideas, Kinsella argues, is complete nonsense. And it all has to do with ontology and with utilitarian considerations. Working with Humean assumptions regarding property, he asserts that property has sense only when we refer to scarce goods. If apples, chairs and money would literary fall from the sky, being overabundant, private property would be useless:

[A] little reflection will show us that it is these goods' scarcity – the fact that there can be conflict over this goods by multiple human actors. The very possibility of conflict over a resource renders it scarce, giving rise to the need for ethical rules to govern its use. (2001, 19)

Let us take the following example, partially inspired by Kinsella, which will clarify the importance of scarcity for property rights⁴. Assume that two

⁴I used a similar example in Cernea and Uszkai (2012, 309).

individuals, A and B, are both philosophy students. A has a copy of Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, while B doesn't. They both have to write an essay on the implications of Kant to animal ethics. What should B do, if he doesn't have the book in order to finish his essay? One option would be to take A's book, either by coercion or fraud. If he steals or tricks A, then A is left without a piece of his property, namely his copy of Kant's treatise. This happens because physical objects such as copies of books are rivalrous in consumption.

Now let's assume that B and A are not students anymore, but researchers. A invents a new way of harvesting corn, and B harvests his corn accordingly. Is this the same example as the previous one? Could we say that B stole something from A, such as in the first example? The answer, Kinsella suggests, is no. The two examples are different, because material and immaterial objects are (and not only in a trivial manner) different. While B harvested his corn according to A's discovery, this action does not leave A either without his new harvesting mechanism but neither without the idea behind that mechanism. Ideas, in comparison to physical objects, are not scarce. Ideas become scarce, however, when the state or global agreement such as TRIPS enter the scene. As a consequence, through IP rights, ideas become scarce with the simple goal of artificially increasing their price on the market.

Copyrights and patents have another repugnant implication, explored by Palmer (1990). His starting point is the following definition for IP rights: "Intellectual property rights are rights in ideal objects, which are distinguished from the material substrata in which they are instantiated" (1990, 818).

Palmer contends that, by granting a property right in an idea to an author or inventor, you end up with a situation in which you undermine the exercise of peaceful transactions on the market of individuals who have a property right in a physical object. Let's return to the previous example with Kant's book. Assume that student A decided that it is possible that in the world there are more students like B, who don't have the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. He decides to make use of the copy which he bought legally from the bookstore by making it available at a global level by the use of a peer-to-peer file sharing technology such as BitTorrent. National laws and international agreement prohibit A's use of his property in this sense because, apparently, this would be a form of theft. As we earlier saw, this is not the case.

Palmer also tries to show why the Posnerian approach to IP is wrong, by arguing that the process of emergence and evolution in this case has been different than the one in physical objects. Property rights, he contends, have a Demsetzian dimension: private property rights appeared, hypothesized Demsetz, as a means of internalizing negative externalities (Demsetz 1967,

351-359). The paradigmatic case he presented was the impact of the fur trade for the Indians living in the Labrador peninsula. What we should look at when we analyze this process of emergence and evolution, asserts Palmer, is the fact that it was a natural one: the rights emerged in an invisible hand like manner, as a result of human action, but not of human design. In the case of patents or copyrights, nevertheless, the situation was quite different:

Patents for new inventions were issued by the English Crown with the aim of raising funds through the granting of monopolies or of securing control over industries perceived to be of political importance, while copyrights functioned to ensure governmental control over the press in a time of great religious and political dissent. Monopoly privilege and censorship lie at the historical root of patent and copyright. (Palmer 1989, 264)

The same is true for modern agreements such as TRIPS. The globalization of IP was not an endogenous but an exogenous process. Private lobby played, Susan Sell asserts, a pivotal role (2003, 96-121). Adopting TRIPS under the umbrella of WTO seems to be, for a libertarian, a surprising decision. While the World Trade Organization claims to be in favor of free trade as a development strategy for poor countries, what copyrights and patents do is exactly the opposite. Free trade is useful, effective (Norberg 2003) but IP is not a mark of it. On the contrary, it affects the availability of either new and cutting edge research in poor countries, but also of important products such as drugs.

As we have seen up to this point, libertarians such as Kinsella or Palmer consider that IP is not, in fact, real property, because it has to do with immaterial, not material objects. Moreover, the existence of rights such as patents or copyrights interfere with the exercise of private property rights in material objects. What about the incentive argument? Is IP necessary for stimulating creativity?

Boldrin and Levine explore this hypothesis. If copyrights and patents work as their supporters claim, then we should take a closer look at the available empirical data. Their contention is that, in most of the cases, copyrights or patents are, to put it mildly, at least constrictive.

Take, for example, the case of pharmaceutical patents. Boldrin and Levine underline the fact that the pharmaceutical industry is the poster child of the proponents of IP, but not even in this case their claims are not irrefutable. It is generally accepted that developing a new drug is a costly affair. According to their estimation, around 800 million \$ are necessary for bringing up a new drug

on the market (Boldrin and Levine 2008, 212). In short, the pharmaceutical industry is characterized by:

[l]arge fixed cost, small and constant marginal cost, innovation as the main competitive tool, and the market concentrated in rich countries where pirating is practically absent – this sounds like the textbook description of a traditional Schumpeterian industry. (Boldrin and Levine 2008, 213)

In spite of this facts, useful drugs do not necessarily owe their existence to IP. For instance, Boldrin and Levine cite a study prepared by the British Medical Journal on the most important drugs ever invented. According to the study, only two medical substances or procedures are associated with a patent: chlorpromazine and the Pill. Others, such as penicillin, germ theory or vaccines did not need IP (Boldrin and Levine 2008, 229). Boldrin and Levine also analyzed the list of the 46 top selling drugs. They discover that, from that list, 20 products have absolutely no link with patents, with drugs such as aspirin, Ritalin or insulin belonging to that list. The other 26 are in a gray area: four were discovered by chance and patented afterwards, two were discovered in university labs and a few of them were simultaneously discovered by more companies or researchers (Boldrin and Levine 2008, 229).

It seems that patents are not a necessary incentivizing tool in order for new and useful pharmaceutical to be researched and produced. What about productivity, though? Had countries which adopted early on a patent system a more dynamic and prolific drug market? The answer is, once again, negative. Boldrin and Levine use, as a case study, the implementation of patents in Italy in 1978 (Boldrin and Levine 2008, 222). The Italians implemented a patenting system of drug formulas only after foreign countries pressured them. Patenting did not mark a new and successful period for the Italian market. If in the period 1961-1980 Italy discovered almost 10% of the world's active chemical compounds, after the implementation of a similar type of IP system (like the one in the US or UK) productivity rates decreased. From 1980 to 1983, Italy contributed with only 8 pharmaceutical compounds, which meant a decrease of almost 3% in comparison to the earlier period. How can we quantify the implementation of IP? I think we could say that IP and patents in Italy, far from representing an incentivizing tool, meant a 1,78% loss productivity rates. It might not seem much, but it sure wasn't the case that Italian pharmaceutical companies profited from property rights in ideal objects.

To sum up, the libertarian opposition towards Intellectual Property and the globalization of copyrights and patents rests upon the conclusion that rights in ideal objects are not property rights but monopolies or privileges. The Lockean argument, as Kinsella observes, is not doing the trick. The utilitarian one neither. Moreover, the existence of patents and of international agreements such as TRIPS is associated either with private corporate lobby (as Susan Sell revealed) or with illegitimate state intervention.

Rawlsian Intuitions: IP, Global Justice and Unintended Consequences

A Rawlsian account for Global Justice starts from the assumption that “we do not live in a just world” (Nagel 2005, 113). For Rawlsian moral and political philosophers the problem of Global Justice and the equality of persons at a global level is, however, a thorny issue. In *A Theory of Justice* (1999 [1971]), Rawls explicitly asserts that all individuals should be treated equally by social institutions at a national level. At a global level, however, Rawls posits the equality of peoples, not of persons (Rawls 1999). Kuper (2000) questions Rawls on this particular topic, by assuming a cosmopolitan perspective. Chartier (2014, 16-27) also finds later Rawls unconvincing. A cosmopolitan Rawlsian account, Chartier asserts, can ground the preoccupation for Global Justice for persons, not peoples. The Difference Principle (Rawls 1999 [1971], 53) could and should be viewed as a foundation for analyzing global institution, with IP legislation falling between these lines. Thomas Pogge echoes this approach:

Rawls’s principles for domestic institutions would be sufficient, if modern states were indeed closed schemes. In that case there simply would not be a global basic structure for global principles of justice to apply to. But since modern societies are not closed, we must at some point go beyond Rawls’s first approximation and ask how his theory might best be adapted to the complexities of the real world. (Pogge 1988, 233)

In order to evaluate from a Rawlsian perspective the consequences of IP and the globalization of copyrights and patents, I will construct a minimal framework. The starting point is Rawls’ Difference Principle (DF) and the original position. Behind the veil of ignorance, individuals don’t know their natural talents or their position in the (global society). Someone could end up being a rich citizen of Sweden or a poor researcher from South Africa. This is

why, I hypothesize, the DF is applicable, at the global level, to persons, not peoples. What does the DF entail? As Rawls puts it:

Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

(a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and

(b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. (Rawls 1999 [1971], 266)

For Rawls, society (even the global one, I conjecture) should be viewed as a “cooperative venture for mutual advantage” (Schmidtz 2006, 185). A free (global) society shouldn’t be treated as a zero-sum game and global institutions should be judged on how they favor the least advantaged. Are pieces of IP legislation such as TRIPS in moral agreement with such a moral premise?

First of all, a mental experiment is in place. I earlier stated that, behind the veil of ignorance, in the original position, individuals do not know where they will live. Chances are, however, that a person might end up a philosophy student in Somalia, and not in the USA. What are the moral implications of this simple fact? Due to artificial scarcity, philosophy books are more expensive. Who is affected the most by this situation? It surely isn’t the young philosopher from the most advantaged countries in the world. For a potential philosopher from Somalia, though, copyrights act so as to prevent them from exercising their analytical talents.

Sure enough, the example of the availability or affordability of philosophy books to students from the developing world might well be obsolete. The impact of patents, more exactly pharmaceutical patents is, however, dramatic. It might affect, for instance, the desire of individuals from poor countries to get morally enhanced through bio-chemical means (Socaciu and Uszkai 2015). But the case of HIV/AIDS drugs in Africa is one example where globalizing patents through TRIPS clearly violates the DF.

Ferreira’s study (2002), paints a startling picture of the unintended consequences of patent system in the least advantaged countries in the world. In South Africa (the country which, in 2002, was believed to have the most people infected with HIV/AIDS), “a one year supply of the most common HIV treatment combination from the major drug companies costs a staggering \$1200. The generic equivalent of the same drug combination costs \$350 per year” (Ferreira 2002, 1134), while the average daily income was only \$7.

This happens because, by granting inventors such a property right in ideal objects, TRIPS also grants them a power to decide who could enjoy the fruits of their inventions. The increase of price as a result of artificial scarcity affects, however, mainly poor residents of the developing world. The same is true for copyrights: “The copyright mechanism, on the other hand, further exasperates the stratification emerging from the patent mechanism and is incompatible with Rawls’s principles of justice.” (Murphy 2012, 120).

Some Rawlsians political philosophers such as Pogge agree with these arguments. Their solution, however, is not the libertarian one, the abolishment of the global IP system, but a global agency (the Health Impact Fund) which would reward pharmaceutical companies or independent researchers who would work on affordable drugs for the developing world market. Patents, however, would still be in the game (Pogge 2010, 148).

Concluding Remarks: Free Markets and (Global) Social Justice?

In a recent paper Munger (2011, 1-2) distinguishes between two types of libertarians: the destinationist and the directionalist. While the former do not tolerate a violation of two fundamental ethical precepts (full self-ownership and the Non-Aggression Principle), the latter libertarian considers that any step which increases self-ownership or the sphere of liberty is an improvement. While destinationist are more rigid, directionalist libertarians are more flexible and realist.

A similar distinction could be advanced regarding Rawlsian moral and political philosophy. While the orthodox interpretation of the DF asserts that the state should make sure that the least advantaged individuals are protected by social and economical inequalities, a directionalist Rawlsian might have a different take: any step towards reducing the inequalities between individuals (either at a national or global level) is preferable.

The fact of the matter is that, most of the times, market mechanisms work better than state mechanisms. As the case of IP globalization shows, it is the introduction and advancement of copyrights and patents that violates the DF, not market forces. With IP legislation such as TRIPS being a result of private corporate lobby, we do not have, in our globalized world, a free market for ideas. State intervention managed to upset normal incentive patterns which inventors or companies would have had on a free market.

To conclude, I consider that a Bleeding Heart Libertarian perspective (as a synthesis of libertarian and Rawlsian considerations) on IP and the

globalization of copyrights and patents is possible. Libertarians dwell on the importance of market mechanisms and private property rights. Intellectual Property rights do not make any sense for most libertarians. They are state granted privileges or monopolies; nothing more and nothing less. Rawlsians consider that institutions should be judged by taking into consideration the following requirement: that inequalities should be in favor of the least advantaged in society. Globalized IP is, as I have tried to show in the present study, in clear violation of the DF.

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III. Globalization and International Relations: New Constraints on the Political?

The Economic and Political Dimensions of Globalization.

Implications of the KOF Index for European Countries*

Sebastian-Florian Enea

If we consider the broad definition regarding globalization proposed by David Held, we come to understand the fact that this phenomenon has long exceeded the boundaries of the international economy, having deep influences on areas such as global policies, social and spiritual life, culture, etc. Thus, the international literature acknowledges the fact that in today's modern society the process of globalization depicts not only an economic dimension, but also a political, social, cultural, and an environmental dimension.

One of the main difficulties in terms of defining the concept of globalization entails the problem of accurately estimating its dimensions. Why? Mainly because different authors have defined and analyzed this process from the perspective of their field of research, thus providing a different optic regarding the dimensions of globalization. Therefore, economists analyze the economic dimension and its effects, sociologists are interested in the social environment and its transformation within the global framework, political scientists focus on the political dimension etc. But are there any boundaries which can prevent or limit a historian's research on globalization? The answer is that there are none, this approach being more than welcomed and providing, in the end, a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

When questioning the dimension, or rather, the dimensions of globalization, it is important to note that these cannot be clearly delineated one from another. For example, global environmental problems cannot be studied in isolation, they require a link with the political and economic dimensions. This

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global network, which exists not only between the actors on the international stage, but also between the thematic areas, represents one of the peculiarities of globalization.

The present study aims to answer two important research questions, namely *What are the foundations of the economic and political dimensions of globalization, in terms of major determinants?* and in close connections with this, *What is the best globalization index, in terms of composition, robustness and analysis accuracy?*

Thus, the structure of the paper is as follows: the first section will present the economic and political dimensions of globalization, focusing on their main determinants, while the second part will assess the main globalization indexes, providing a comparative study in terms of robustness and accuracy of analysis etc.

The Economic Dimension of the Globalization Process

Traditionally, the dimensions of globalization are described from the perspective of the large domains of civil society. The economist Manfred Steger classified the four dimensions of globalization as being the economic dimension, the political dimension, the cultural and ideological ones (Steger 2003).

The globalization process is not linear, but rather it involves a dialectical relationship between its economic, political, cultural (Ramsaran and Price 2003), as well as its ideological dimension (Steger 2003), often being depicted on antagonistic positions.

According to Steger's approach, economic globalization represents the process of increasing and broadening economic interconnections worldwide, based on technological and capital flows that have stimulated trade in goods and services.

The economic dimension of contemporary globalization has its roots in the new world economic order created by the Bretton Woods System in 1944. Based on this, major economic powers decided a set of rules for all international economic activities, such as: trade liberalization through multilateral negotiations based on nondiscrimination; unrestricted current account transactions, but not those concerning capital flows; practicing fixed rates based on a currency that has a defined parity in gold or dollars, the oscillation margin being $\pm 1\%$ against the official parity (Gilpin 2004).

The Bretton Woods System laid the foundation for the creation of three new major international economic organizations. The International Monetary

Fund was created to manage the international monetary system, while the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, known today as the World Bank, was originally designed to provide loans for post-war reconstruction process in Europe. These two institutions were followed by the creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), in order to promote a free and fair trade regime based on formal negotiation of tariff reductions (Steger 2003).

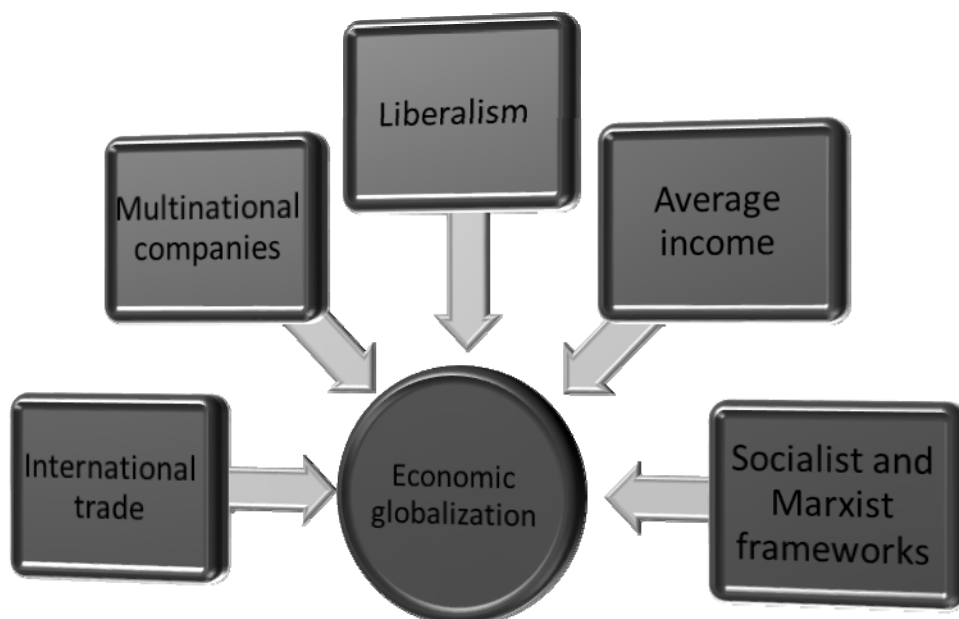
In its nearly three decades of activity, the system contributed greatly to the establishment of what some have called “the golden age of controlled capitalism” (Steger 2003, 38). In the decades following the Second World War, Europe and the United States rejected *laissez-faire* ideas and embraced an extensive version of state intervention, ideas promoted by the British economist John Maynard Keynes, one of the most fervent supporters of the Bretton Woods system and also the architect of the Keynesian doctrine. However, in the early 1970s, the Bretton Woods system collapsed. At the start of the eighth decade of the last century, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan abandoned Keynesian ideas and shifted towards the neoliberal doctrine, thus creating the connection between economic liberalism and the concept of globalization.

“The new neoliberal economic order” (Steger 2003, 40) received legitimacy after the collapse of the communist system between 1989 and 1991. Starting from that turning point in the evolution of economic and political relations at the international level, the three most important changes related to economic globalization were the internationalization of trade and finances, the growing power of transnational corporations and augmentation of international economic institutions such as the IMF, the Bank World and the World Trade Organization.

These three institutions mentioned above enjoy a privileged position to create and implement the rules of a global economy, which is defined by a clear difference of power between the north and south hemisphere (Steger 2003). If during the Cold War, their main function of offering loans to developing countries was to some extent linked to the desire to limit the influence of communism, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the IMF, the Bank World and World Trade Organization have synchronized their agendas in order to accelerate the process of integration and deregulation of international market (Steger 2003). To be more precise, we can point out the fact that all three international organizations have focused their efforts on supporting national states to achieve of what Jagdish Bhagwati called “the transition to globalization” (Bhagwati 2004, 222).

David Held argues that the economic dimension of globalization is based on the five major determinants, namely international trade, multinational companies, economic liberalism, the average income and the Socialist and Marxist frameworks (Held 2004), each bringing their contribution to the creation and development of economic globalization.

Figure 1. Determinants of economic globalization



Source: own processing, based in ideas from Held D. (2004), *A Globalizing World? Culture, Economics, Politics*

In the conducted analysis, Held states that all five determinants act simultaneously giving the shape and structure of the current economic globalization. Thus, international trade, considered a direct result of tariff and non-tariff reductions and an increase in international competitiveness, relies on foreign direct investments (FDIs), technological innovation, labor migration and global communication possibilities. Multinational companies, perceived as the main advocates of international trade, create a global infrastructure of production and sales, based on FDIs, access to cheap raw materials, skilled labor and modern communication and transport systems.

These two major determinants of economic globalization acts in an international framework created on the principles of the liberal doctrine. The development of globalization, especially its economic dimension, was always considered by the literature as a direct consequence of the liberalization of global trade flows. This liberalization was based on the development of regional economic structures such as the EU, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, etc., or international trade agreements, such as GATT (Steger 2003).

This does not automatically imply that globalization acts in the same manner across different countries of regions. Naturally gaps, in terms of development and economic growth, can appear, and this situation is best explained via the concept of trade integration speed, calculated as the difference between the growth rate of world trade and the growth rate of the world GDP (Gunter and van der Hoeven 2004). This concept explains the fact that the integration within international markets of goods and services varies at regional or continental levels, mainly due to national trade policies, trade openness, the capacity to absorb foreign investment flows, the number of firms with foreign capital, the degree of technological development in various industrial sectors etc.

The liberalization of financial transactions, which includes key components such as the deregulation of interest rates, elimination of loan controls, privatization of banks and financial institutions owned by the state (Steger 2003), and furthermore, flows of foreign direct investments and portfolio investments (Gunter și van der Hoeven 2004), represents another determinant of the economic dimension of globalization. The globalization of financial transactions allows for an enhanced mobility between different segments of the financial industry, with fewer restrictions and greater investment opportunities. This new financial infrastructure emerged in the 1980s with the gradual deregulation of capital markets and securities in Europe, America, East Asia, Australia, and New Zealand (Steger 2003).

The recent developments in the commercial and international financial system have been accompanied by an internationalization of production (production fragmentation and / or specialization on products or product lines). This means that production is divided into several separate processes, taking place in different countries or regimes (Gunter and van der Hoeven 2004), chosen according to the degree of profitability for the production of raw materials, assemblies, subassemblies and intermediate products, all regarded as a part of the final product. These production systems are the prerogative of transnational companies which, through foreign direct investments, and by using international market entry strategies such as mergers and acquisitions,

joint-ventures or Greenfield Investments, develop new production capacities in countries or areas that provide the best location advantages.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) are considered today to be the engine of the global economy, the main vehicles of globalization. These companies manage, through an impressive number of subsidiaries owned around the world, about two-thirds of the global trade. Rivaling nation-states in terms of economic power, they control much of the capital investment in the world, the cutting-edge technology and have facile access to international markets. A comparison made between the volume of worldwide sales and national GDP shows that out “of the top 100 economies in the world, 51 of them are multinational companies, and only 49 are countries” (Steger 2003, 48). Therefore, it is not surprising that some critics have characterized contemporary economic globalization as a corporate globalization or globalization from the above.

TNCs have consolidated their international operations by taking advantage of an increasingly deregulated world labor market. The availability of cheap labor, the access to resources and more favorable conditions of production in the southern hemisphere have increased their degree of mobility and profitability. A very relevant example for this situation is the German automotive manufacturer Volkswagen, which has a production global system fragmented and delocalized, comprising subsidiaries in Japan, China, South Africa, Nigeria, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, the United States and Canada.

The ability that these companies have to delocalize and fragment the production process reveals, to a certain extent, the transformations which have occurred in the global economy. These giant corporations, through their ability to create comprehensive development strategies, have become major determinants of trade and financial flows, of industrial and economic expansion all around the world (Steger 2003).

As a general assessment, we can state that the economic dimension of globalization encompasses a large number of components¹ that describe its

¹ On the other side of the “barricade”, but acting as counter-balance measures, in terms of pro and anti-globalization paradigms, are the average income per capita and the socialist and Marxist organization systems. The critics of globalization consider that current gap increase between rich and poor, in terms of the degree of economic development, took place during the era of globalization (Held 2004). What is more, anti or alter-globalists argue that in developed countries, globalization leads to increased dependence on imports of products at lower prices and better quality, due to the delocalization of production processes to areas that provide a cheap labor force and easy access to raw materials. This calls for wage reductions and increases in unemployment in developed countries.

nature and dynamics. However, while we recognize the importance of economics in this “chronicle of globalization”, a comprehensive analysis should not be unilateral, it must be skeptical and unbiased to various opinions, ideas and theories, and last but not least, it must provide a multidimensional approach.

The Political Dimension of the Globalization Process

The economic perspectives regarding globalization can hardly be discussed without making a presentation to its other dimensions, especially the political one. The multidimensional nature of globalization requires an analysis regarding the interaction between political and economic aspects.

Political globalization refers to the intensification and development of political relations around the world. These processes raise an important set of policy issues relating to the principle of state sovereignty, the increasing impact of intergovernmental organizations, and future prospects for regional and global governance (Steger 2003).

The international literature underlines the fact that, in order to explain the effects on to the state and political decisions, it is necessary to explain a number of concepts from the field of political sciences and diplomacy, such as global politics, global governance and international regimes. Thus, the concept of global policy defines the extent of political relations in time and space, the extension of political power and political activities beyond the borders of the modern nation-state. The hypothesis of global policy denies traditional distinctions between national and international, territorial and non-territorial. Although governments retain their role as powerful actors in the international environment, they now share the “scene” with a number of intergovernmental organizations, international agencies and institutions, acting within regional

Socialist and Marxist organization systems consider global capitalism as a regime that is based on exploitation. Michel Albert argues that trade relations between international companies and local entities from poor countries are carried out to the advantage of the rich, thus “the benefits do not go more to the weaker party with fewer assets, nor are they divided equally, but they go disproportionately to the stronger traders who thereby increase their relative dominance” (Albert 2001, 1). Albert’s general assessment is that global capitalism offers more power and wealth to the rich and weakens the poor (Albert 2001; cited in Held, 2004, 95). Moreover, the desire to compete, privatization, deregulation of international markets have undermined economic growth prospects for many millions of people (J. K. Galbraith, 1999; cited in Held, 2004, 95).

economic structures such as the European Union, NAFTA, ASEAN and MERCOSUR (Held, McGrew, et al. 2004).

Global governance refers both “to formal institutions and organizations that develop and maintain rules and regulatory frameworks governing the global order, as well as to multinational corporations, transnational social movements and non-governmental organizations (herein called pressure groups) pursuing goals and objectives important to regulatory systems and transnational authority“ (Rosenau, 1997; cited in Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 2004, 74).

Over the last century, governance, seen from an international perspective and in the last decades from a global one, underwent a series of changes. Before 1914, industrialization and economic integration led national governments to design and create strictly defined international institutions, which allowed the development of cross-border infrastructure. After WWI, the development of international institutions has been hampered by military insecurity and the economic, political and social effects of the war. After 1945 there was a third stage of development of international policy framework, perceived as a response to a lack of integration and sovereignty (Sobel 2009).

Working within the same analysis framework, Jagdish Bhagwati discusses the concept of *proper* or *adequate governance*, regarded as an essential component in the management of globalization at sub-national, national and supra-national levels. The author believes that one of the most important aspects which shapes this concept is recognizing the fact that the two forces of the 21st century, namely economic globalization and the development of the civil society, could be harnessed together to determine a joint success, both in rich, as well as in poor countries (Bhagwati 2004).

Bhagwati stresses out the importance of managing the transition to globalization. Although globalization can bring economic and social benefits, this begs the question “*How fast must the transition be?*”. The best solution is provided in the terms of a solid institutional mechanism, thus reaffirming the importance of its role within the concept of proper governance. This mechanism, devoid of ideological influence or lobby pressures, can achieve not necessarily a rapid transition, with harmful effects in some cases, but more likely an optimal one.

The concept of international regime can be defined as a set of explicit or implicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures towards which the sum of the expectations of all stakeholders from a range of international relations converges (Krasner, 1983; cited Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and

Perraton, 2004, 74). International regimes signify an increase in the degree of institutionalization of global politics, representing forms of global governance, distinct from traditional notions of governance process (Young 1989; cited in Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 2004, 75). Finally, it should be noted that these procedures include a broad spectrum of players, among which we can mention national governments, government departments, intergovernmental organizations and local government authorities.

A very important aspect related to the political dimension, an issue intensely debated in various formal environments (academics, mass-media etc.), is the role of the national-state in the ongoing process of globalization. Thus, we can raise the question if they can keep national and state prerogatives in dealing with international environment, or are these transferred to local and international levels?

The nation-state, in its modern design, was the protégé of the new international order. At the end of World War II, they became the main type of political organization on the planet. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of nation-states has increased exponentially, creating liberal or representative democracies (Held, McGrew, et al. 2004).

The contemporary expressions of globalization have led to an increased permeability of the old territorial borders, reducing also the conceptual limits and cultural dividing lines. Highlighting these trends, hyper-globalist suggested that the period since the late 1960s was marked by a radical “deterritorialization” of the policies, rules and governance processes, “national-states have become inter-connected, parts of a much larger model of transformations and global flows” (Nierop, 1994; cited in Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 2004, 73).

The American realist paradigm considers that the system of international relations is based on national states which, in the absence of a supranational higher authority, act on the world political stage in order to maximize their own power or security (Brăilean 2004). A similar approach can be found in the constructivist paradigm, which, starting from the same point as regards to the role and importance of nation-states in international relations, considers that the state and its interests are based on social structures and their connections, and the motivation for inter-country linkages lies in inter-subjective relations, and not commercial exchanges (Brăilean 2004). Thus, we have two paradigms of thought that place the state in the center of the globalization process, considering that it, regarded as a form of political, economic, social and territorial cohesion, represents the “point of equilibrium” in international relations.

It is believed that the contemporary society is witnessing a change of paradigm, from a traditional democratic system to a market democracy. This concept describes the relationship that develops between pluralist democracy and liberal economic doctrines. Taking as a starting point the “self-regulating principle of open markets, it is considered that the economy creates a certain structure of social and political relations, taking the role of a free competition for power, mediated by rational citizens” (Brăilean 2004, 181). The free market is the support of the democratic system, promoting pluralism and decentralization. This structure can be really the only viable combination of economic, political and social environments.

Another key issue in close connection with the political dimension is the globalization / regionalization dilemma. More specifically, the question is *Whether the globalization process includes regionalization, or the latter is an antagonistic process?* The national and international literature has addressed this idea from two points of view. The hyper-globalist thesis (Held, McGrew, et al. 2004) believes that regionalization represents an intermediate stage of development of the state, from the national level to a globalized society. On the other hand there are opinions which argue that today we are witnessing a process of regionalization and not of one of globalization, as the world economy increasingly relies more on developing the three major continental structures, namely Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America (the skeptical perspective – Held, McGrew, et al. 2004).

The state, in its traditional sense, no longer has the same role in international relations, it is opposed by “the emergence of authorities at local, regional and global levels” (Brăilean 2004). The world is organized on three levels: local communities, regional structures and a supranational or global society.

From a personal perspective, we consider that globalization and regionalization processes are not antagonistic, but they are complementary processes. Regionalization is an intermediate stage of development at the international level, towards the goal of a global society, it “complements and systematizes the process of globalization” (Brăilean 2004, 233). The integration into blocks or regional political and economic structures, such as the European Union, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ASEAN etc., offers many more development possibilities for member states, based on a solid legal and institutional framework.

In conclusion, we can state that the effects of globalization on contemporary politics have transformed the foundation of the world order, as it rethinks traditional national-state systems and reconfigures the international political relations.

Globalization Indexes – Comparative Approach

The idea of measuring globalization and its effects has represented a key research issue in academia for a number of years now. Even though there are opinions as regards to the futility of this endeavor (Rossi 2008), this approach can be useful in understanding the nature and dynamics of the globalization process and the impact it has on the contemporary society. Martens, Caselli, et al. (2014) underline the importance of the theoretical and methodological approach and believe that, generally speaking, the differences between the globalization indexes, in terms of composition methodology, arise from these two topics.

The international literature has presented the process of globalization in various opposing perspectives. However, a very important aspect on which researchers have agreed upon is the fact that globalization can only be quantified and analyzed by using indirect approaches, employing variables that assess its impact on the economy and the welfare state. Caselli (2008), as well as Dreher (2006), state that there are two viable methods for addressing the issue. The first one would be to use proxies, or empirically measurable variables, in order to estimate the dynamics of globalization. In this case, the most frequently employed proxy is the GDP or the GDP per capita (Darvas and Szapáry 2004), (Fidrmuc and Korhonen 2010), along with other macroeconomic indicators, such as trade flows (Frankel and Romer 1996), (Frankel and Rose 1998), foreign direct investments (Artis 2003), (Enea and Palasca 2013), trade openness (Dollar 1992), restrictions on the capital account (Alesina, Grilli and Milesi-Ferretti 1993), (Chanda 2001) etc.

The studies that have used various macroeconomic variables for analyzing a multidimensional process such as globalization have often received criticism, mainly because this approach does not fully grasp the overall influence on economic growth and social welfare. Thus, the alternative proposal is to develop and implement an aggregated index, based on a set of distinctive economic, politic and social indicators.

There are a number of such indexes, including the A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalization Index (ATK/FP), the Maastricht Globalization Index (MGI), the CSGR Globalization Index, as well as the KOF Index. A very important reason that supported the idea of developing these composite variables was the need to bridge the gap between theoretical and empirical studies (A. Dreher, N. Gaston, et al. 2009), and also to provide a better understanding as regards to the impact globalization has on the society in general. In addition to these four, we can mention other indexed, such as a

Cultural Globalization Index (Kluver 2004), the New Globalization Index (NGI) (Vujakovic 2010), the Person-Based Globalization Index (PBGI) (Caselli 2012), etc., but these have yet to receive international recognition.

The second question the present study aims to provide an answer to is *What is the best globalization index, in terms of composition, robustness and analysis accuracy?*, by providing a comparative study of the most known and widely used globalization indexes, namely the ATK/FP, the CSGR, the MGI and the KOF. In order to have a more accurate perspective, the study will present them in groups of two, based on their similar composition methodology.

One of the most widely used indexes is the A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalization Index (ATK/FP), which is considered in the international literature to be the starting-point for the development of a new and improved aggregated variable which can assess the impact of globalization.

The theoretical index is derived from the dimensions of globalization and consists of four main components, namely *economic integration, technological connectivity, personal contact, political engagement*. The index is constructed by assigning to each component or dimension two or more variables, numbering 12 variables in total. These variables are constructed based on one or more various indicators. Furthermore, each variable is normalized on the scale 0-1, where 1 is the highest value recorded among all countries for the chosen variable in the year t , while all the other values are considered proportionally in fractions of 1.

According to Caselli (2008), one of the main drawbacks this normalization method has is the fact that variation analysis over a period of time of the index for a particular country has little to no significance. That is why “the normalized values are multiplied by a ‘scale factor’ which is set equal to 100 for each value referring to 1998 and varies proportionally to the increase or decrease in the maximum value of each variable relative to each year” (Caselli 2008, 7).

The most important aspect after calculating all the index numbers for the chosen variables is the way in which they are combined within the general globalization index. And this is done by assigning weights for each variable starting from theoretical ideas regarding the importance of each component within the globalization process. It is important to underline here the fact that the economic variable carries most of the weight, because they count of about 50 % of the entire index. Nonetheless, this is an absolutely biased approach, which has received a fair share of criticisms.

The calculus method for the overall ATK/FP globalization index for any country is relatively simple. After all the weights have been allocated, they are

multiplied with the corresponding index numbers and finally the sum of all these numbers next of kin to each variable is calculated, the resulting sum representing the overall index.

A subsequent index, considered to be an improvement to the ATK/FP, as regards to some aspects, is the CSGR Globalization Index developed by Ben Lockwood and Michela Redoano (2005; cited in Caselli 2008, 9). It starts from the assumptions that the process of globalization is divided into three major dimension, economic, political and social (which is separate into two distinct sub-dimensions, people and ideas) to be more precise. Following the same methodology as the former, each dimension has assigned a number of variables, ranging between 3 and 9, and must total exactly 16 variables. Subsequently, every variable corresponds to one or more indicators.

Each variable is normalized on a scale of 0 to 1, where 1 represents the maxim value registered by the variable in the analysis period between 1970 and 2001, while 0 is naturally the lowest recorded value.

The weights for each variable included in the model are assigned based on the principal component weighting method, a technique which maintains as much information as possible as regards to each country during aggregation (Caselli 2008). As in the case of the ATK/FP, the weights are allocated via theoretical consideration, thus creating the same feeling of bias. To this we can add the fact that each update done to the index implies revising and reassigning the weights for each variable, therefore increasing the complexity of the instrument.

In addition, Caselli (2008) considers that the variables which compose the economic dimension, namely *trade*, *foreign direct investments*, *portfolio investments* and *income*, need further revision, mainly because they depend in structure on other macroeconomic indicators, like trade openness, fiscal and financial policies etc.

The calculus method is somewhat more complex, compared to the A.T. Kearney index, and it implies aggregating all of the normalized variables into partial sub-indexes, related to each of the three dimensions, by calculating the arithmetic mean for all the assigned weights. The overall index is formed by compute an average from the three partial indexes.

Therefore, as we can clearly see, these two indexes share numerous characteristic, as regards to the chosen dimensions, variables and in some aspects, in terms of the methodology. Needless to say, they also share limitations. One of the most important ones is the fact that both of them use an excessively large number of variables and indicators (Caselli 2008). This situation derives of course from the wish to include the abundant features of the

globalization process. But employing such a vast number of variables implies that fact that, for some countries, it will be very difficult to calculate the overall index. That is why the ATK/FP is calculated for only 62 states and the CSGR for 103.

In addition to this, the need to gather such a vast volume of information, from various domains, implies a longer period for processing, thus reducing the importance of the overall index. This also means that the overall index is going suffer a lag of around 2 years, period during which numerous events can take place and change the “face” of globalization.

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This next part of the study is dedicated to the presentation of two other globalization indexes, namely the Maastricht Globalization Index (MGI) and the KOF index. As with the previous two examples, we have decided to present the latter together because they share a set of similar characteristics, especially in terms of the theoretical approach.

Martens and Zywiets (2006), as well as Martens and Raza (2009), developed what is known in the international literature as the Maastricht Globalization Index, or MGI. This index was created based on the idea that the ATK/FP needed some improvement and aimed to enlarge the present analysis framework by including the sustainable environment dimension of globalization. In short, the MGI index is based on a cross-section analysis of 117 national states (Enea and Palasca 2014) and tries to improve the A.T. Kearney index on a number of important aspects, such as data processing, the choice of variables, the weights of variables and the interpretation of the outcome. What is more, it introduces two new variables for the calculus methodology of the overall index, namely the environment and trade-in-arms (Dreher, Gaston and Martens 2008).

The MGI is created by completing for major steps. The first consist naturally of choosing the relevant variables for the index, a choice which is arbitrary, but constrained by the rationality principle (Jaba 2002) and data availability. This primary stage helps develop the major categories which will create the index, and these are global politics, organized violence, global trade, global finance, people on the move, technology and environment. All of these categories are assigned one or two variables, based on necessity. We find it

interesting that the MGI index tries to cover all the major globalization dimensions, as they are depicted by the international literature².

The second stage implies finding the appropriate quantitative indicators for measuring the chosen variables, while the third step involves calculating distributions for all variables at different means and variances. It is important to note here that almost indicators follow an exponential distribution (Dreher, Gaston and Martens 2008). This of course implies extracting the natural logarithm from all variables, thus smoothing the distribution frequency and making them more facile to compare.

During the last step, a weighted sum of all indicators is computed, providing the overall globalization index for an entity. This score represents a rank by which the states included in the analysis are compared. Needless to say, the country with the highest overall score is considered to be the most globalized one.

All in all, the MGI index is more robust than its predecessors, but it has some limitations, especially regarding the sensitivity to extreme values and the year-to-year variations. Due to the methodology employed, the index has a much reduced sensitivity to marginal (extreme) values, being centered on median component values. Furthermore, the strongest year-to-year variations are filtered by the averaging process for the highly volatile components, sharply decreasing the dependence on the choice of base year in several component indicators (Dreher, Gaston and Martens 2008).

Another important aspect in terms of limitations derives from the quality and availability of data. This situation originates from the capabilities and priorities of the organizations in charge of collecting the data for the required 11 indicators, as well as from the reporting abilities and seriousness of each country. This can result in excluding various states from the index, and thus producing incomplete results.

The last index included in the present analysis, the KOF globalization index, is based on the research conducted by Axel Dreher and his team from the ETH Institute in Zurich. It starts from the same foundation as the ATK/FP index (mostly in terms of variables employed in the analysis), but it is constructed by employing panel data analysis³ on a sample of 122 countries, covering a time span of 33 years, from 1970 to 2002 (Enea and Palasca 2014)⁴.

² For further reading see Held, McGrew, et al. (2004), Steger (2003) etc.

³ This signifies that the analysis is done both cross-section and cross-time, thus providing more accurate findings and adding weight to the overall index.

⁴ The index for 2014 covers up to 207 countries over the period 1970 to 2011. For more information see http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/media/filer_public/2014/04/16/press_release_2014_en.pdf.

It was introduced in 2002 (Dreher, 2006) and further revised in subsequent studies (Dreher, Gaston and Martens, 2008). The KOF Index of Globalization covers the economic, social and political dimensions of globalization. To be more precise, the three dimensions of the KOF index are defined as:

- economic globalization, characterized as long distance flows of goods, capital and services, as well as information and perceptions that accompany market exchanges;
- political globalization, characterized by a diffusion of government policies; and
- social globalization, expressed as the spread of ideas, information, images and people (Dreher, Gaston and Martens 2008).

As regards to the calculus methodology, this is a more complex than the previous indexes. Keeping in line with the purpose of the present paper, we are going to include just a short summary. According to Dreher (2009), the present KOF index, updated in 2009, is developed by transforming each variable into an index on a scale of one to hundred, where one hundred is the maximum value for a specific variable over the 1970-2011 analysis period and one is the minimum value. Needless to add, higher values imply a greater degree of globalization.

Subsequently, the weights for calculating each sub-index are determined by using the principal components analysis for the entire sample. The analysis partitions the variance of the variables used in each sub-group. The weights are then calculated in a way that maximizes the variation of the resulting principal component, so that the indices capture the variation as fully as possible. The same procedure is applied to the sub-indexes in order to derive the overall index of globalization (A. Dreher, N. Gaston, et al. 2009).

The KOF index is considered to be more robust and more accurate than other such indexes, mainly because it is based on a better methodology. To be more precise, it is developed by using panel data analysis, which has the advantage of both cross-sectional (country wise) and cross-time (year wise) analysis. This implies that it conducts a bi-directional study, detecting structural transformations which have occurred in the same country, over the entire period (i.e. effects of economic and social policies, change of political regimes etc.), or in same year, in all the states included in the sample (i.e. effects of economic crises, impact of geo-political conflicts etc.). Furthermore, it covers a longer analysis time span and it provides more accurate results for a bigger number of countries.

The main conclusion that the KOF index induces is the fact that a high score greater globalization leads to better economic, political and social results. Dreher (2006) believes that, generally speaking, a higher KOF score can imply the chance of higher economic growth rates. But, it would be very foolish to believe that only by achieving a high globalization score the national economy will grow and poverty will be reduced (Enea and Palasca 2014).

These aggregated indicators have received academic recognition due to the explanatory power they carry. For example, the studies that have employed the updated versions of the KOF Index have underlined the fact that globalization has positive effects on economic growth and national welfare, but it also increases social inequalities (Potrafke 2015), (A. Dreher 2006), (Martens and Amelung 2010), (Enea and Palasca 2014). In addition to this, several research papers based on the MGI index have concluded that a country's degree of globalization is in direct correlation with its sustainability and national health (Martens and Raza 2009), (Martens and Amelung 2010). But here it is important to mention absence of a causal analysis, the results being based only on correlations between the employed variables.

In a very recent study, Martens, Caselli et al. (2014) underline the importance of critically assessing the composition and the methodology on which these indexes are developed. Furthermore, they underline three key aspects which need to be taken into account when tackling the idea of measuring globalization, which are the concepts which need to be measured (i.e. internationalization, liberalization, universalization, deterritorialization etc.⁵), the multi-dimensional approach (namely which global dimensions should be included in the analysis and which should be left out, vis-à-vis data availability and structure, necessity etc.) and last but not least the unit of measurement (who or what is the subject of study exactly, be it country, city or individuals).

Taking into account all these opinions, the authors consider that “a better strategy might well be to work towards a set of complementary globalization indices. Rather than focus on finding ‘the best’ composite globalization index, indices of cultural globalization of cities could co-exist with indices of economic globalization of countries, and so on. The way forward might be to differentiate globalization indices in terms of the level of analysis (without losing sight of interplays between scales), in terms of the dimensions (without losing sight of interrelations of the political, the social, the economic, and the cultural), and in terms of the distinction between de facto globalization and globalization policies” (Martens, Caselli, et al. 2014, 10).

⁵ For further reading see Scholte (2005).

Conclusions

Due to its complex and somewhat illusive nature, globalization puts forwards the incredible challenge of understanding and defining it. In addition to this, the process of contemporary globalization has surpassed the “natural” borders of economics, reason why today we speak in terms dimensions of globalization. The international literature considers that these are, generally speaking, economics, politics, social environment, culture and/or ideology.

The purpose of the present study was bifocal. First of all we wanted to answer the question *What are the foundations of the economic and political dimensions of globalization, in terms of major determinants?* Contemporary economic globalization is based on what we acknowledge today as the new economic world order, establish in 1944 via the Bretton Woods System. This structure “set the scene”, in terms of rules and regulations, for all the major economic activities. The framework designed at Bretton Woods endorsed ideas such as trade liberalization, unrestricted current account transactions, practicing fixed rates based on a currency that has a defined parity in gold or dollars etc. After its relinquishment during the 1970s, the economic environment entered a new phase of development, namely the new neoliberal economic order.

The determinants of modern-day economic globalization are considered to be liberalism, international trade and financial relations, and last but not least, the activities and operations of multinational corporations. All of these latter three combined, acting within a liberal framework, determine the nature, dynamics and direction of the international economic environment, being considered as vectors of the globalization process.

The international literature believes that the main pillars on which political globalization stands are global politics, global governance and international regimes. The events of the last couple of decades have extended political powers and political activities beyond the borders of the modern nation-state, so that today national governments share their roles and responsibilities with various intergovernmental organizations, international agencies and institutions, which act within regional economic blocs such as the European Union, NAFTA and MERCOSUR.

A very important aspect within this political dimension is the idea of managing the transition towards globalization, which, as we have seen, implies a solid institutional mechanism, unbound by lobby activities or ideological pressures. Thus, this mechanism can focus on increasing positive benefits and altering negative outcomes, achieving in the end an optimal transition towards a global society.

Re-thinking the Political in Contemporary Society

The second objective of the study to provide a comparative study that would answer the question *What is the best globalization index, in terms of robustness and analysis accuracy?*

The academic environment acknowledges a number of such indexed, out of which we have decided to focus on the four most important and widely used ones, namely the A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalization Index (ATK/FP), the Maastricht Globalization Index (MGI), the CSGR Globalization Index, and the KOF Index. The methodological foundation is fairly simple, all of them being constructed based on the major dimensions of globalization, that is economic, political, social and sometimes cultural. These dimensions are assigned into quantifiable variables, which correspond to real-life indicators, such as trade in goods and services, portfolio investments, international migrations, Internet users etc. The variables are given weights, chosen accordingly to their importance, and the weighted sum of all the indicators gives the overall national globalization index.

The study has proven that when compared to one-another, the KOF globalization index appears to be the most robust and provides the most accurate results, due to a number of factors. First and foremost it employs panel data analysis, which provides the advantage of a bi-directional study, thus detecting cross-sectional and cross-time structural modifications that have occurred. In addition to this, it has a longer analysis period (42 years) and it provides global indexed for around 207 countries.

All in all, it can be said that aggregated indexes can offer the proper environment for the consensus between various quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative disciplines, such statistics and econometric modeling can work together with qualitative methods, like theoretical background analysis, surveys, case-studies etc., and thus bridge the gap between theory and practice. But the most important aspect here is the multi-disciplinary perspective. Researchers from a range of research fields, such as economics, political sciences, sociology, history, anthropology can address the same globalization questions from various dimensions, hence conducting a more complex analysis and proving a broader understanding of globalization⁶.

⁶ The future research direction will aim to employ KOF Globalization Index a relevant sample of countries, i.e. members of the European Union, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ASEAN etc.

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Realism and Neorealism in the Context of Globalization: An Impediment to Achieving Global Justice? *

Costel Matei

Introduction

From the perspective of political realism, the contemporary system of states can evolve, at most, as an international order with institutions that meet national interests and values. This concept differs from the global society or global order necessary to realize global justice. The situation depicted is produced by the reality of international relations characterized by the absence of supranational institutions able to protect and enforce universal moral norms upon international anarchy and decentralized policy.

In international relations the main virtue seems to be, in terms of realism, the prudence which is prevailing over the interests of justice. I think that the incompatibility between realism and liberal cosmopolitan theories resides in the differences between the fundamental virtues of these theories. The central virtue of liberal cosmopolitanism is equal moral consideration for all people. From the perspective of this cosmopolitan value, equal consideration for the interests of all individuals may represent a critique of political realism and of the status quo of international politics.

Even so, political leaders are guided by the prudence principle when deciding on the allocation of income or national resources to support the poor citizens of other nations. If they were guided by the principle of equal moral consideration, they would not be able to solve the problems of citizens in the society they represent because resources should be allocated to those of other

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societies that are more burdened. Thus, under the anarchy conditions of the international political system, realism emphasizes the duties, responsibilities and liabilities of political representatives on the security and economic interests of the citizens who elected them. In addition, a political leader can not do more than the internal system laws and the public opinion allow him to foresee.

But cosmopolitan projects are not such as to endanger the welfare of the citizens of developed countries, sovereignty and national autonomy or to undermine the responsibility link between political leader and citizens. Cosmopolitan theories are considering the acquisition of rules and global institutions, redistribution of certain goods from the exploitation of natural resources, a culture of giving and other principles of global justice that ought to be based on human rights and on other universal moral principles (Pogge 2008; Beitz 1999; Singer 1972, 2002, 2009).

The incompatibility between cosmopolitan projects and political realism also emerges from the political actions that can have different effects and consequences on the states system and individuals. These effects are difficult to predict at the national level and even more difficult will this be at the international level given its specific anarchy. Thus, some actions aimed at establishing justice can generate unpredictable and uncontrollable consequences so that can cause the opposite. This suggests that a virtue of international policy should be attention, a concern of political leaders interested in not taking actions whose consequences may affect national interests.

Realism is one of the possibilities to understand the contemporary world and current international relations. "Without reflecting on realism we can neither understand nor criticize our tradition of thought in international relations. Nor can we hope that we can change the thinking and practice of international relations" (Keohane 1986, 4). Political realism has deep roots in contemporary political philosophy.

The implications of realism in contemporary world are quite strong and this view continues to dominate a significant part of foreign policy decisions. Relations between nations can be understood in terms of this approach. Foreign policy is based on theoretical conclusions provided by realism and neorealism. Therefore, I believe that the political realism approach is important to analyze our contemporary world, but we must understand if is justified in the contemporary world, in order to observe from where appears the reluctance to cosmopolitan theories and to normative projects that support global justice.

However, I will try to analyze the political realism and the neorealism in order to demonstrate that these theories do not offer conceptual arguments strong enough to justify the rejection of global justice. Furthermore, I will try to

highlight the theoretical connections that can be identified between the international relations theories that are based on the principles of political realism and cosmopolitan projects which support the theoretical possibility of global justice. This study also aims to highlight the possibility of some compatibilities between the neorealist conceptions and the contemporary cosmopolitan theories and to argue that concepts like prudence, attention, power, distrust etc. are not the only virtues of the foreign policy, the only standards used on the evaluation of successful policies.

Political Realism

Thomas Hobbes's political theory is one of the main sources that have fueled political realism. The theoretical foundations that facilitate this thinking are provided by Hobbes in his work *Leviathan* and international relations can be interpreted in a realist sense. The *state of nature* described by Hobbes is the situation where there are individuals living in the absence of sovereign powers able to regulate relations between them. "In times when people lived without a sovereign forces to lead them, they were in that condition which is called war; thus, the war of every man is against all other people" (Hobbes 1998, 84). In the state of nature all men are considered enemies by others and thus there is a need for security, the need to strengthen capabilities, distrust, attention, prudence and also other consequences. A status quo characterized by potential war and conflict generates a race between individuals who will follow their main interest: self-preservation. Moreover, this interest prevails over any other moral principle. In such a situation, individuals may adopt any means without moral constraints and limitations that may be imposed by other people.

Although Hobbes does not address, in the work introduced above, the relations between nations, this is often mentioned in debates regarding international realism. This reference is used to design a normative natural state as an analogy to international relations. "Recent realistic thinking derives, in particular, from political philosophy of the theorist Niccolo Machiavelli and the English theorist Thomas Hobbes" (Kegley and Wittkopf 1995, 22). From this perspective, international relations are not managed by a sovereign force able to hold the power and the means to manage relations between nations. In this regard, international relations can be interpreted as an anarchic environment in which states, characterized by preserving national interests, are in a permanent state of war.

We consider that Hobbes supports, through his theory, such an interpretation of international relations because he puts the sign of equality between individual rights in natural state and the rights of states in international relations.

As it happens between people without a master where exist an ongoing war of every man against his neighbor, where there is no legacy to be sent to the son, or to be expected from the father without property of goods or land property, with no security, but with full and absolute freedom of every man in particular: so also in the states and federations, which are independent of each other, each state has complete freedom to do as its own judgement (which implies the judgment of those representing the State) to pursue the state's benefits. But, above all, they live in perpetual war and at the limit of battle, with armed borders and with cannons aimed against the surrounding neighbors. (Hobbes 1998, 142-143)

We think that here appears the possibility to interpret international politics in a realistic sense. According to this interpretation, the states are in a condition characterized by mistrust and caution, by the desire to become stronger than neighboring states which translates into a policy of every state against the all others. In this case, the states are free to follow their interests without being constrained by moral principles. In our opinion, this may be the case in reality, if we look at recent conflicts in the Middle East¹ or Russia's territorial expansion in Crimea determined solely by the strategic benefits that this state pursue, which may provide a paradigmatic example for anarchical international state described by Hobbes and realism theoreticians. Thus, the states have exclusively national obligations and responsibilities towards their citizens. Actions taken at the international level do not fall under the scope of the moral standards.

But we have many other examples of situations where states cooperate and there is not at all this constant state of conflict and prudence. The states of the contemporary world are working under the dome of the various international institutions even if there is not a global sovereignty or the means to enforce certain rules to all states. They have success in providing the necessary regulatory framework for each state to pursue their interests and allow other

¹ See the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Israel, and Gaza Strip.

states to do the same and even to pursue common, global interests. International Realism is a theory that can be applied to understand the particular phenomena of foreign policy, but we consider that it can't be a model of interpretation to be applied in all situations precisely because the states, for example in the European Union, do not live in constant fear of a war between neighbors, the boundaries are free and are not armed, and cannons are not directed to neighboring countries. The economic interdependence between states and processes of globalization have contributed to the elimination of rivalry between states and conditions have fueled the emergence of new foster cooperation:

Such interdependencies explain the emergence of international institutions and practices that organize the rivalries between states so that cooperation is needed to maintain these practices and non-violent means of conflict resolution. (Beitz 1999, 43)

States, in the current international order, have the ability to achieve objectives rather through a foreign policy that is cooperative oriented than through hostile manifestations that are designed to generate a certain degree of superiority and certain advantages compared with the neighboring countries. In the context in which states success may depend, on a significant proportion, on coherent integration in the regional or even global economy, political leaders can no longer assume international policies characterized only by prudence and distrust. Even in the most hostile areas of the planet there are treaties for cooperation on different areas of interest. For example, even if Egypt was directly involved in four wars against Israel, the two countries signed a peace treaty in 1979, and things have evolved so that since 2004 Egypt and Israel signed a Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) which allows that, together, the two states have the possibility to export goods to the US, under the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the US and Israel. Following this agreement, trade relations between the two countries have improved and had the power to establish cooperation agreements also in other areas of interest.

This example is paradigmatic because it emphasizes the essence of international relations in the contemporary world. Hostilities against another State entail the isolation and sanctions of others states operating under the principles of the United Nations. In such an environment, that can result from such isolation and under sanctions, no state can thrive, can not achieve national objectives and can not contribute to increasing the welfare of citizens to which has responsibilities.

We can notice, therefore, a paradigm shift in terms of the very principles underlying realism of the Hobbesian origin in international relations. Prudence, mistrust and desire to win power in relation to neighboring countries may be perceived as elements that compound today, along with others, the ability of a state to become a relevant actor on a competitive international political scene. Prudence can be perceived and implemented in terms of economic interdependence. This can generate multiple benefits but also involves a number of risks. The economic crisis is one of these resulting risks, and the events that began in 2007 showed that prudence, mistrust and other similar realistic principles may have a place in the contemporary world except that they do not act against another State, but to counter potential threats that global community may face. Also, a State may acquire relevance or power on the international relations scene not through actions against other states, but by strengthening the cooperation with them. Cosmopolitan theories are relevant for this type of interpretation.

This is the context that explains the emergence and development of international institutions and practices, supported by cosmopolitan theories which have the ability to enhance cooperation, settle rivalries by means of negotiation, mediation and conflict management in order to avoid the use of violence. Institutions acquired in this way can be understood as systems or structures of rules and principles which have an increasing role in growing the organization of international relations. These institutions can solve problems by using positive instruments. Thus “the instruments of power available to an actor has partly determined by the kinds of relationships in which the actor stands with respect to the other actors it wishes to Influence. In particular, common membership in institutions or common participation in practices often constitutes nonviolent forms of power. Thus, for example, members of organizations like the United Nations can bargain their votes for desired actions by other global actors. Or, traders in some commodity (say, oil) can withhold the commodity from the market to cause others to change their behavior in prescribed ways” (Beitz 1999, 44).

But, however, Hobbes’s theory was continued in various forms by theorists of international relations in the twentieth century, who believed that in the absence of a global sovereign power justice can not be conceived. Edward Hallet Carr is one of the thinkers who had this perception on international relations. His conception was linked, to a large extent, by the importance *power* has in international relations. States must take account of this problem and the way it is managed translates their success or failure in the international arena. His theory goes against the idealism which is seeking a radical transformation

of global politics, a transformation that pursues a peaceful world in which the power of states is no longer a concern. “After the First World War, liberal tradition was brought in international relations. Utopian writers in English-speaking countries thought that by creating the League of Nations they could eliminate the power from international relations” (Carr 1981, 103). But Carr believes that this approach is utopian since it ignores the reality and requires its replacement with acts of will. International politics is always lined with the political power. When the States cooperate in matters of transport, to prevent certain epidemics or combat drug trafficking, these activities are non-political or technical, according to Carr’s theory. And if we are dealing with issues involving the power of a state against another, then we discuss political activities. This can not be ignored by a State in its relations with other states. State’s power in foreign policy is important because it ensures a higher potential for achieving citizen’s *security* toward which is responsible.

Thomas Pogge: An Idealist?

From this point of view, Thomas Pogge may be considered an idealist because he considers that the normative projects which provide the establishment of some principles of global justice depends on “generate goodwill, especially from the wealthy and powerful states” (Pogge 2008, 217). Pogge is considering legal support that any project of this kind needs in order to be realized. A normative project of global redistribution of justice must have the support of influential states. This does not mean, however, that reality in international relations is tensioned, but assumes the need for a greater opening of the states, in the context of interdependence that characterizes contemporary relations among states, for the solutions that intellectuals and academic community propose.

Pogge introduces the idea that there is a possibility of imposing an institutional system through which global society issues can be addressed. The philosopher bases this consideration on two arguments. The first is that our moral convictions can have effects even in terms of international politics. These beliefs may belong to politicians, but more importantly, moral convictions of citizens have the power required to impose political action. Pogge’s assumption is realistic since we accept that civil society has become, in the contemporary world, a voice that is increasingly present in public debates that have a direct impact on domestic and international policies. The involvement of individuals in public life transcends borders because they have the knowledge and the tools

to advocate common interests globally. States' power, that Carr raised to the rank of political virtue, may be exceeded in importance in the international relations by the power of the global society that manifests a force capable of generating political, social and cultural changes. This way Pogge believes that a "moral mobilization for the sake of eradicating world poverty" (Pogge 2008, 217) is possible and, I add, other pressing issues of global society.

The second argument that Pogge introduces has to do with another principle of political realism, namely *prudence*. Sure, in the cosmopolitan theory, the term takes on other meanings. Therefore, an institutional global order is necessary as it appears to be the main route through which states can provide shelter against external influences that can affect and can generate significant changes in the lives of citizens. Given this interdependence, that characterizes international relations, we can no longer afford to ignore the events that are happening in other states. Their economic and military development or their domestic collapse may have an impact on the entire system of states. It is therefore in the interest of all States to relate with prudence to the progress of the entire global sphere, and this feeling of caution has the ability to generate global principles, institutions and respect for fundamental human rights in order to constrain and censor excesses, to build a stable international scene and to generate procedures through which common problems can be eliminated.

Although Carr would relate to the Pogge's cosmopolitan project as an idealistic and utopian one, we can see that the latter manages to bring a distinct understanding of the concepts that have emerged from realistic philosophy as power and prudence. These are necessary concepts also in the cosmopolitanism theory, but relative to the contemporary society they can generate different views on international relations. One of these views is that of Pogge who, from these arguments, legitimizes the existence of global institutions, organizations and principles with the specific role of limiting the activities of states through the guarantee of the rights of individuals. We can see that Carr disregards international institutions initiatives for having tried to eliminate the role of power in relations between states. But, operating with the same concepts, adapted to contemporary reality, Pogge manages to argue in favor of such initiatives. This analysis demonstrates that the reality to which Carr relates no longer has that much in common with the one envisaged by Pogge. Ignoring the reality is indeed a big problem when we are trying to generate a reliable international relations theory. But today, rather those theories which are based on classical political realism are ignoring the reality and the cosmopolitan may

be considered as better approximating the global environment in which we live (Pogge 2008, 218-219).

We can notice that Carr's theory prevents the individuals to have the possibility to change the international system in a way so fundamental that power should not be a decisive factor in interstate relations. This concept is driven by the premise that ultima ratio of power in international relations is the war. It can become the last resort that a State may have in complex situations and that is why power is very important. This may be exercised, ultimately, through the military instrument. "The potential for war is a dominant factor in international relations and this is why military power is becoming a recognized standard of political value" (Carr 1981, 109). We believe that this ultimate solution of international relations has its origin in the state of nature described by Hobbes and is characteristic to political realism.

The situation described encourages an arms race and discourages cooperation among states. We argue that this kind of interpretation leads to the seclusion of international relations, locks cooperation and, ultimately, human progress. Humanity has reached a point in its development where close collaboration between nations is necessary and, moreover, can not be avoided. The interdependence of modern societies is the factor that determines, despite the inherent risks, the increase of technological innovation and general welfare.

In my opinion, the fundamental political problems encountered on international relations scene can also have another type of solution. This view is not generated by an utopian idealism, but is inspired by a real international institution. International Court of Justice is an institutional model that can be used to demonstrate the normative ability to solve urgent problems among nations. Cooperation in this institution and the principle of arbitration between states have led to nonviolent resolution of conflicts that are arising between states and which have different roots like territorial, economic, ethnic or otherwise. There is, thus, in the contemporary world, the ability to build organizations with the potential to bring to the table representatives of the States and identify means and tools to avoid war and to follow the rights and freedoms of individuals globally.

There is, however, in international relations, an important set of liberal and idealistic norms that make up the framework of states behavior in times of peace and describe events that can not be accepted in wartime (Walzer 2004). In our opinion, these standards are closely related to liberal doctrine and to theory of justified war (see Walzer 1977). International law stipulates the situations in which war can be considered the ultimate solution to certain problems related to the threats of global security. But these are exceptional circumstances and do

not characterize the links that have been established in recent decades among peoples and individuals. International relations are not characterized by a constant fear of war or repression from neighbors. We admit, however, that in certain regions of the world there are more powerful manifestations of caution among states that have good reason to be concerned about the possible actions that can be taken by neighboring countries. But examples like the European Union, the UN and other international institutions, which are not utopian and do not ignore the reality, may have weight in normative projects of global justice that illustrates how the conditions that lead to a realistic approach to foreign affairs should be overcome.

The normative projects of international academic world aimed at developing global community, its security and actions of states are aimed at fostering the welfare of all individuals, not only of its own citizens. States can develop with respect for each other and assuming global ethical standards and may be subjects for the international law.

Carr's theory is specific for the realistic model of thinking about international relations between the two wars, but realism was taken and was deepened at the end of World War II, the main thinker of this current is Hans Morgenthau. If there is a similarity between Carr's theory and Morgenthau's this is addressing the issues of international relations from the perspective of *power*.

Hans Morgenthau's Theory of International Relations and Global Moral Aspirations

Morgenthau's theory is important for my argument because it helps me to demonstrate that political realism is dealing with principles that are not accurate for the contemporary world and which imply moral, social and political problems. The philosopher manages to define key issues of political realism, those related to international anarchy, emphasizing the relevance of political power in relations between states and the difficulties raised by the concept of global justice in these circumstances. The aim incurred by him in his *Politics among nations* is to provide a theory of international politics (Morgenthau 2006, 3).

In this respect, Morgenthau aims to highlight six basic principles of political realism:

1. Political realism believes that politics – and society in general is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature.

2. The main indicator that helps political realism to find his way through the field of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power. The concept links rationality that tries to understand international politics and the facts that should be understood.

3. Realism believes that the key concept is *interest*, defined as power, and understand as an objective category universally valid, but does not charged it with a meaning fixed once and for all.

4. Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action. Similarly, it is aware of the inherent tension between moral requirements and political successful actions.

5. Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation's with moral laws that govern the universe.

6. So, the difference between political realism and other schools of thought is real and profound. As much of the theory of political realism was misunderstood and misinterpreted, it is not disputed its intellectual and moral attitude in political issues (Morgenthau 2006, 4-18).

The first principle envisages the existence of objective laws that have their roots in human nature, which have always existed and governing the conduct of policy. But a principle of this nature can not explain the existence of different types of government for centuries. We do not think that through this principle dictatorial governments, totalitarian, monarchist, communist, democratic and others, all alike can be explained.

I believe that the concept of interest that Morgenthau stresses in the second principle is problematic. It provides neither more nor less than the pursuit of national interests by exerting the power that a State has. If political decisions are to be taken on the basis of national interests and by applying any means provided by the power that a state holds, then no moral principle can prevail, and no rules, rights and regulation of the international institutions can be considered important. Foreign nations can not work on the basis of such a criterion, even under the conditions of anarchy specific to the international relations. Starting from the principle of pursuing interests, no nation has the guarantee of stability. Depending on the power it holds any nation can take any action against other nations where almost *anything* can be defined as *national interest*. "The claim (Morgenthau's) that the structure and power are sufficient to explain international politics can not be supported. Not all states or leaders behave the same" (Kaufman 2006, 38). Relations between states can not work in this way. In international relations there are other types of norms and standards prevailing over particular interests of states. Otherwise, such a sphere would be characterized not only by anarchy, but chaos. In such conditions any

state interests may be endangered. Moreover, there are rights and moral principles that all states are obliged to comply with, otherwise they may be subject to international sanctions that can take different forms.

Defining interest as power and having an objective and universally valid character raises other theoretical issues. National interests should not be defined only in terms of power. National interests derive from conservation of the rights of citizens. That is, the national interest is to protect the lives of the citizens against external threats and to reject any threats that have the potential to jeopardize this goal. Any action taken by the state to guarantee such security may be considered legitimate. But if we define the national interest, for example, in terms of territorial expansion and in terms of power we are able to achieve this interest, the action taken in this regard can be considered illegitimate and immoral, especially since they are seriously violating national interests of another state, and the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

Moreover, Morgenthau links this principle to the circumstances of the moment. Therefore, States through their representatives may define power and interests depending on the context. Any possible combination of forces such as military, economic, industrial, etc. can be used as a power in the service of some interests. In Morgenthau's vision

power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man. Thus power covers all social relationships that serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another. (Morgenthau 2006, 13)

Such a view is contrary to the ethical principles and moral values through which relationships between countries are built today. Of course, from this perspective, international realism consists in an objection to cosmopolitan theories.

Normative projects that support global justice are considering building a global society where every individual counts from a moral point of view. Human control over another person is rejected by definition. Each person should have complete freedom to manifest while the rights of others are not violated. This is so because we must act as the imperative asks us: "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." (Kant 1972, 87). From this imperative, we can conclude that the cosmopolitan projects, of

Kantian origin, will oppose such an approach, which comes from the perspective of realism, on the human being.

In addition, the exercise of power to influence, control and manipulate the minds of individuals, and especially to force them through physical violence to obey certain interests or to achieve them is totally unsubstantiated. Individuals have the right to express themselves freely and to support certain interests. The State has the role to establish constitutional norms and institutions that govern interactions between people. But it has not the right to decide what the interests of individuals are and what is right for everyone, or to justify this using different means of control and coercion. This is because “neither one person, nor any number of persons, is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years, that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it. He is the person most interested in his own well-being: the interest which any other person, except in cases of strong personal attachment, can have in it, is trifling, compared with that which he himself has” (Mill 2003, 140).

Morgenthau leaves the impression that he introduces, through his theory, moral principles in international politics. However

realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to actions of the States (...). There can be no political morality without prudence, that is, without consideration of the political consequences of seemingly moral action. (Morgenthau 2006, 14)

Morgenthau argues that states could take account of moral principles, but, when the individual has the right to sacrifice on their behalf, states may not allow such principles to get in the way of successful political action, but must be guided by the moral principle of political action.

Normative projects that support global justice require global moral principles that states must meet in order to ensure satisfaction of the interests of all individuals and, thereby, of all states. From this perspective, we should not put above all moral virtues, the supreme virtue in politics which is prudence. While theories of global justice advocate the need for global moral standards, political realism believes that a state can not stumble in this type of normative construction in pursuit of its interests, and a state’s success is measured in actions deployed in the service of national objectives. Charles Beitz therefore concludes: “Morgenthau seems to argue that states, by pursuing their own

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interests, justify disobeying moral standards that would otherwise constrain their actions” (Beitz 1999, 21). But according to Morgenthau’s theory, the moral aspirations of a nation should not be identified with the universal moral principles. From the perspective of global justice that would not be admissible. Nothing should prevail over global moral standards and no action can be justified if eludes them.

No international system constraints, no imperatives of political power nor the types of regimes does not act the same in any circumstance to remove a wide range of potential practical or moral choices that states man or strong states can make. (Kaufman 2006, 38)

Given these shortcomings of political realism and of its application in international relations and the development of international sphere, characterized by the emergence of new actors on the scene, this trend came in decline in the ‘70, but it was not entirely abandoned. One of the trends that have succeeded is neorealism.

Neorealism in International Relations

One of the first representatives, and perhaps the most important, of this current is Kenneth Waltz. He has criticized political realism or realpolitik, as he has identified it among international relations theories, because it does not manage to cover the issues of international relations theory. Waltz shares some principles of realpolitik: the interests of representatives and States are motivations for political action; political needs come from unregulated competition between states; the calculation of these necessities, supports the identification of the policies that will best serve the interests of the state; success is the ultimate unity of policy, and success is defined as preserving and strengthening the State (Waltz 1979, 117). He also believes that States are similar players with the same interests and goals. The actions of political leaders can not be determined by other reasons beyond national conservation interest. In Waltz’s theory influences that are coming from Hobbes’s theory and its realistic interpretation “among States, natural state is a state of war” can be identified (Waltz 1979, 102).

The difference between Waltz's theory and classic realism is:

for Waltz the idea that moral choice and government can be a serious issue in international relations should be reconsidered. Governance can only be about the correct read about systemic imperatives – there is no other basis for choice. (Brown 1997, 277)

Thus, morality should not play a significant role in foreign policy pursued by states. The fundamental principles are only concerning the interests of national survival. Another difference lies in the idea that “force in international politics is not the *ultima ratio*, but the first method or route, and it must be a constant one” (Waltz 1990, 113).

Classical realism, as we have seen, conceived international relations based on distinctive, particular, features of States and on the interaction between them. Waltz's theory took this view further, solving some problems and applying a more scientific approach to the international system. The current difference between the two lies in “the idea that international politics can be thought as a system with a precisely defined structure is the fundamental factor that distinguishes neorealism from realism” (Waltz 1990, 30). Waltz believes that structural realism, as neorealism was called, provides a more specific, theoretically explanation of international relations. If Morgenthau characterizes the international scene as a power struggle, Waltz, through the systemic approach, argues that it is a struggle for security.

The theory of international politics must be addressed systemically because it contains a multitude of variables, and they are in an organized complexity. We think that this positivism is allowing, theoretically, to identify the reality of state's sovereignty and their conduct in an anarchic international system, clasping its variations. Waltz's theory “analyzes not only the properties and interconnections of variables, but also the way they are organized” (Waltz 1990, 39). Waltz identifies two levels of interaction: interacting units or states and international structure. Causal mechanisms work both ways, units affect the structure and the structure influence the units. The way international relations works can be explained by addressing this structure.

The structure is a mechanism that works to produce uniformity of results regardless of the variety of inputs. This structure works in two ways. Through socialization which assumes that actors are influenced by the common structure. “In spontaneously and informally ways, societies establish norms of behavior. A group's opinion controls its members” (Waltz 1979, 75). The structure works, also, through competition, generating a certain order because behaviors are

chosen according to their consequences, and the successful ones are highlighted within the system. The units that are having success are also the system leaders, and others will try to compete for leadership by replicating behaviors proven to be successful.

Based on this concept, I understand that the structure of international politics determines the interest of the States to gain power and no other mechanisms. The power has the role to protect national security. Waltz argues that this structure determines, through socialization and competition, the occurrence of certain behaviors from states. The philosopher argues that there is some economic and military interdependence between states. Given these circumstances, we can conclude that this structure may determine, through the two principles that are manifested, socialization and competition, behaviors that also correspond to the aspirations expressed by cosmopolitan theories.

Waltz's analysis does not prevent us to believe that, in the international politics system, the national success can not be defined, for example, through the extent to which a State succeeds to increase the welfare of all individuals. Such behavior is considered successful so will make other states, on the basis of socialization, to simulate this behavior to be also successful. The national security can be extrapolated and understood in terms of global security. We can accept that a higher degree of security can be achieved in states through participation in the formation of a common, global security, even if we assume a certain kind of selfishness that comes from pursuing their own interests.

Especially if we accept that

structure arises from the coexistence of states. No State intends to participate in the formation of a structure through which he and others will be constrained. (...) Within the system, the structure is made up by the actions of units which builds it. If these units will prosper, will survive or die depends on their own efforts. (Waltz 1990, 91)

I conclude that States may act within the international system to generate a structure that provides them security benefits, etc. and which has no constrains. These and also the survival and national prosperity can be achieved in the contemporary world characterized by interdependence, globalization and the creation of new social relationships between people. The structure that Waltz theorizes can evolve in different directions from the conditions and factors analyzed. I believe that states can form with their actions a global structure to facilitate global justice.

Re-thinking the Political in Contemporary Society

Given all these considerations, I believe that we can draw from the theory of Thomas Pogge, similarly, the manner in which the global institutional order is generated by the interactions between units/states and international structure. The international institutional system is constructed through the interaction of entities and political institutions (UN, NATO, European Union), state governments and other actors. But Pogge believes that this system is coercively imposed and fails to deal with the real problems of global society. The measures set out in this system, from the philosopher's perspective, are designed to meet the interests of powerful states which have greater force to take decisions within international institutions. Pogge sanctioned the lack of equitable cooperation within a system that generates effects on all states and individuals at the global level.

We can see, from this brief analysis, that the interaction between entities does not necessarily produce a system structured to produce benefits for all countries. It does not generate a stable system, but rather a hierarchy within it, even if we accept that the motor which drives the system is the need for power in the service of national security, as theorized by Waltz. The developed countries produce and perpetuate rules and institutions that aim to preserve an international system which brings benefits without expressing moral consideration in relation to poor countries and to citizens who inhabit them. These states do not have the institutional capacity to compete or to simulate the behaviors of those states that are successful.

Pogge identifies such a system that does not give poor countries opportunities to acquire security in its various manifestations: military, economic, social, food, environmental, etc. At least at this point, Pogge's theory seems to complete Waltz's: for socialization and competition principles to operate, the current institutional system constraints (i.e. of a system which is built to perpetuate certain benefits for some units and disadvantages to other) must be removed.

However, Pogge does not exclude, but, more than that, supports the arguments that there is a possibility to generate an international system/international structure to facilitate competition and socialization, even in Waltz's terms. Moreover, "today the necessary change could be much smaller, and the costs they would incur developed countries would be negligible" (Pogge 2008, 98). Therefore, Waltz's theory can be accepted by the cosmopolitan paradigm at least from the perspective in which, starting from the same principles, a structure able to facilitate the achievement of global society's aspirations can be generated.

Conclusions

Political realism can provide many arguments to contradict the idea of global justice. Thomas Hobbes's theory and its extension support the realism in international relations. International relations are characterized, from this perspective, by a natural state of conflict that exists between states in the absence of sovereign powers to control and regulate relations between them. In these circumstances, national security interests prevail over any moral principles. States shall act so as to preserve the power, resources and influence. In an anarchic environment characterized by mistrust, as is the international system in terms of realism, states only have responsibilities to their citizens and that is why their actions are not in the incidence of global moral values.

Political realism is reflected in relations between certain countries, but can not characterize the international scene as a whole. There are many examples of international cooperation and effective functioning of prosperity and development. And this occurs even in the absence of sovereign powers able to manage the cooperation between states. Under such collaboration, states can follow their interests without harming the interests of others and can build normative frameworks enabling them to pursue common interests of global development.

But the interpretation of political realism led Edward Hallet Carr to focus on the power that the state must hold in such a context. Power is the factor that makes the difference on the stage of international relations between success and failure. Carr believes that liberal theorists of British idealism are utopian: the goodwill proposed by them can not replace the power required according to the reality of international relations. International politics is always determined by the political power, and states have an obligation to act so as to acquire and preserve it. Thomas Pogge appeals too to the good will of the rich and powerful states, but in this not the case of an unfounded idealism – he understands that any normative project aims to introduce global standards must have the support of states that can exert the necessary influence to be accepted and ratified.

Also in terms of the concept of power starts Hans Morgenthau's theory on international relations. It also stresses the relevance of political power in relations between nations. Moreover, Morgenthau introduces the concept of national interest which is the main element that determines national policies. Now everything can be defined in accordance with this perspective and any action to exercise such power may be justified. Norms and moral values have no meaning in international relations where states have an obligation to follow their interests, whatever those are. The foreign policy of states can not prevent the

rules and moral virtues, but must act according to national interests, and the supreme virtue in politics which is prudence, a virtue that should trump any other in hierarchies of political virtues.

The concept of national interest, according to which states are taking decision in international relations, is theoretically problematic. Firstly because anything can be defined as a national interest and any action, regardless of the objectives and its consequences, may be justified in these terms. And therefore, secondly, national interests prevail over any moral principles. International politics can not substantiate based on subjective and contextual interpretation of the rules, rights and international law. The International sphere operates through general principles governing international conduct of states. Evading from the respect of these principles, attracts the sanctions of the international community, States acting together precisely because these values are important and because they have an attached meaning, globally shared.

Realism knew a decline in the '70; however, it has not been entirely abandoned, but rather reinterpreted as neorealism. Kenneth Waltz believes that the success of a state is given by its permanent preservation and strengthening. Morality is not important and should not play a role in foreign policy. Waltz scientifically addresses the international system. From this systemic approach appears that the international stage is characterized by the struggle for security. Therefore, Waltz believes he can analyze the behavior of states in an anarchic international environment and can explain how international relations function starting from causal mechanism consists of units that act, states, and structure, which is the international stage. The structure is a mechanism that generates a uniformity of results through socialization, which assumes that actors are influenced by the structure they share and through competition, which considers reproduction of units' behaviors that bring success.

But the structure and international mechanisms described by Waltz can generate different types of behaviors. Any behavior deemed to be successful will be replicated by other units. If we define success in terms of an increase in the general welfare, for example, then, according to the socialization and competition principles, this kind of behavior could be replicated. And if we assume that international relations are characterized by a constant struggle for security, we can extend this as a global need. National security may depend, can be more successfully guaranteed, on a global level security and then states could contribute to the creation of a common, global security. We believe that countries can collaborate in the international system so as to generate a structure that provides them security benefits and others. I believe that the structure

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theorized by Waltz may evolve towards building a global framework to allow justice from the same principles: socialization and competition.

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Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership as an Effect of Globalization*

Mădălina Laura Cuciurianu

Introduction

Globalization has become one of the most important concepts of our times, a notion that describes a variety of complex economic, political, cultural, ideological, and environmental forces that are rapidly affecting the whole world. The process of globalization, understood as an idea and also as a political project, continues to be a controversy within and beyond the academy (Held and McGrew 2007a). The debate over this intricate phenomenon started from its causes and consequences (such as the need for better connections between people; international integration of the world in a single economic system; better transport for people, goods and food; better communication between people, at least from the ITC/technological point of view, from all over the world; elimination of geographical, economic and cultural barriers which have led to consequences like terrorism, climate change and environmental degradation, migratory pressures, social, economic and political instability, religious conflicts). But do we really know what globalization is, what it means, what is the purpose of this process, why did it appear and which are the dire consequences that can affect us and our world? In order to find some answers to these questions, I will emphasize the connection between this process and the changes that occurred on the economic and political level, by bringing into discussion the effects and challenges of globalization (i.e. mass migration, open markets, worldwide competition, brain drainage, global scale economic interdependencies, etc.).

With the rise of the so-called BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) global capitalism has entered into a new stage of

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evolution. For many centuries, Europe and the United States were the “dominators” of the bipolar world, but in the new context, the economic centre of gravity shifted from the West and North to the East and South. Especially China has made a substantial contribution to this change by leading the world in terms of exports. These changes in the world’s economic paradigm are consequences of the globalization process. The main idea of this paper is that due to the effects of globalization which are changing the global governance and trade, the international system, and implicitly the international relations as well as the negotiations of international trade agreements, such as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) are also reshaped.

The article is structured in three sections: the first one is presenting globalization from different perspectives with different definitions, from the simplest to the most complex, in order to stress the evolution of this concept. Also, the most important theoretical debates on this issue will be underlined. The globalization process is shaping today’s international trade trends in terms of removing barriers hindering the flow of goods, services and factors of production on the world market. The multidimensional phenomenon analyzed here has been studied over time by many authors belonging to different fields of inquiry, starting from sociology and ending with political science and economy. There is also a skeptical approach to this issue and this study will present different opinions by bringing into discussion the most important scholars preoccupied with the main concept examined here, such as James Mittelman, David Held, Anthony McGrew, Deepak Nayyar, Dani Rodrik and Ulrich Beck. These are some of the authors (professors in International Relations or Political Sciences) which have tried to define and explain globalization. We used their approaches in this paper because they have been studying this process from the very beginning, in order to find its causes and consequences and to criticize it or find solutions to its challenges in a professional manner, with the proper background.

In the second part of this paper we present the most important issues of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the relation between the concept of globalization and the greatest trade agreement of the 21st century. The phenomenon at stake here has extended its effects to different areas, from the economic to the political one. For that reason, we should examine if launching the negotiations on the TTIP could be considered an effect of globalization and if this is the case, the conclusions of this agreement should be approached and examined from a different perspective. TTIP has already passed through eight rounds of negotiations. In order to see how have these been

structured, Putnam's¹ two-level game is extremely useful. According to this framework, the domestic actors' pressure and lobby at the national level (for the purpose of a favorable policy) could be achieved only in international negotiations. At the international level, the national governments are those who cope with this domestic pressure in their negotiations with a foreign government (as is the case with the countries from the World Trade Organization). In this latter example both games are interconnected and the executive has an advantageous bargaining position, due to the fact that it is the only actor playing at both levels. During the negotiations of TTIP, domestic actors play an important role, but so do the international actors because the "game of negotiations" (Putnam 1988) is played first at the national level, in order to set up those issues to be negotiated, and subsequently at international level.

The third section is a comparative perspective of the two most important free trade agreements of 21st century, namely the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. We have chosen to compare these two trade agreements in order to see whether the differences are significant and which are the similar interests and the hidden provisions supported by the United States in both agreements.

Globalization – Process, Effects, Debates

There are many issues concerning globalization that are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of this process, but the most important aspects are its effects and consequences for the actors involved. The participants in this debate have a more clear perspective on its implications than its meanings.

To answer the question "What does globalization mean?" we have to seek the source of this concept and the evolution of its definitions. The term 'globalization' appeared back in the '70s when authors used it to refer to the European-driven attempt to integrate the Europeans into one global trading system (Modelski 1972). In the '80s, the term was used in the American business school, referring to the fact that any obstacles in the way of business activities of multinational corporations would affect economic wellbeing

¹ The *two-level game* theory is a political model which views international negotiations between states as consisting of simultaneous negotiations at both the intra-national level (domestic) and the international level (between governments). It was introduced in 1988 by Robert Putnam in "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games".

(Chesnais 1994, 14). Later on, in the '90s, globalization becomes the process of time due to the ambiguity of its multiple uses. Susan Strange has tried to define the concept of globalization (1995, 293) by using the following words:

a term used by a lot of woolly thinkers who lump together all sorts of superficially converging trends in popular tastes for food and drink, clothes, music, sports and entertainment with underlying changes in the provision of financial services and the directions of scientific research, and call it all globalization without trying to distinguish what is important from what is trivial, either in causes or in consequences.

So, “[t]he globalization process has a major impact on contemporary economy at a global level. In order to understand the essence, and also the effects of globalization, moderate and less deterministic comprehensions are more helpful” (Stefanović 2008, 263). Being studied like a true phenomenon, the globalization process is nowadays shaping international trade trends. Theoretical debates have sustained intensive and multidisciplinary studies in order to find a proper definition and an answer to the question “What does globalization mean?” In their efforts of defining this concept, theoreticians managed to highlight its individual features, especially those manifested in the political and economic field. Taking into consideration the removal of barriers to the flow of goods, services and factors of production on the world market, globalization is seen as an important and crucial channel in the international integration process which expands the role of markets on a global level (McMichael 2000).

Globalization is a complex phenomenon which has multiple effects, hence the difficulty of defining it. There are various ways of approaching this problem and Mittelman (2006, 64) states that there are, in fact, three possibilities for defining globalization: first, as an intensification of global flows of goods and production factors, facilitated by modern transportation and different ways of communication; second, as a compression of time and space in the way that events from one part of the world can affect others from distant locations; and third, as a historical structure of material power. However, globalization can represent a historical transformation in the economy, politics and culture of the world (Mittelman 2006, 64).

Defining globalization and creating a proper conceptual framework for its study is a complex research task, shaped by the contributions of many authors preoccupied with it. In order to understand the complexity of definitions

offered up until now it is necessary to systematize different understandings of the notion, by using the classification of theories differentiated by three courses of analysis (Held and McGrew 2007b, 2): hyperglobalists, transformationalists and skeptics. If we sum up the three perspectives, a full imagine of globalization and its role in the world could be drawn (Stefanović 2008, 270): the hyperglobalists understand globalization as a unique and progressive process of unification of world economy. The transformationalists insist on the multidimensionality of this process and consider it uncertain in terms of results. Finally, the skeptics consider the effects and the sustainability of globalization as being a challenge. We must acknowledge and accept the restraints that a divided global polity entails and that “the scope of workable global regulation limits the scope of desirable globalization” (Rodrik 2011)).

The globalization process is, undoubtedly, producing effects on contemporary economic trends, manifested in foreign trade, international investment and international finance. In this sense, globalization can be defined as a process which increases economic openness, cohesion and integration (Nayyar 2006, 141). As Nayyar (2006) argues, economic openness is not limited to trade, investment and financial flows; it could also be applied to flows of services, technology, information and ideas across national boundaries. The economic interdependence is not a symmetrical one: on the one hand, we have the interdependence of countries in the industrialized world and on the other, there is also a kind of dependence of developing countries on industrialized ones. Therefore we may conclude that there is much less interdependence among countries in the developing world. In the case of economic integration, we can refer both to markets and production.

The globalization process is at the centre of contemporary theoretical debates. The multiple perspectives on its meanings show the complexity and importance of this phenomenon. Because of its capacity of changing contemporary economy, its effects are reflected in the integration of world economy through trade, investment and financial flows. The concept of globalization is defined broadly as “a process of integrating nations and people – politically, economically, and culturally – into a larger community” (Encyclopedia of the New American Nation 2014). The homogenization of the entire world is in the centre of this process and this is reflected in another, more sophisticated definition: “globalization promotes convergence, harmonization, efficiency, growth, and perhaps, democratization and homogenization” (Weiss 2000, 2).

Another author who tried to define globalization was the British sociologist, Anthony McGrew (1992, 23). He used the terms “interconnection” and “linkage” to explain what does globalization mean: “the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies which make up the modern world system”, and as “the process [whereby what happens] in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the world” (McGrew 1992, 23).

“There are a lot of controversial discussions not only over the definitions of the concept of globalization, but also on the extent of it as an economic trend and its impact on policy making. The skeptics see globalization as something of a myth, and globalization claims are highly exaggerated” (Hirst and Thompson 1996). From a realist perspective, it is well known that globalization creates not only opportunities for national economies, but it also induces a social pressure. In order to obtain benefits from open markets, and to avoid social instability, governments must provide social protection. In this situation, it is obvious that globalization has gone too far and, accordingly, it increased rather than diminished the need for public intervention (Rodrik 1997).

The economic dimension of globalization refers to the intensification and stretching of economic connections across the globe (Steger 2013, 37) by way of technological progress (an indicator for the social transformation on the market) and changes in the way people undertake economic production and organise the exchange of commodities. Gigantic flows of capital promoted by new technologies have stimulated trade in goods and service. Markets have been extended around the world by creating new linkages among national and regional economies. We have the example of transnational corporations, powerful international economic institutions and regional trading systems like Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) or the European Union which have emerged as the major building blocks of the global economic order characteristic of the 21st century.

Many people associate economic globalization with the controversial issue of free trade (Steger 2013, 41). Northern countries and regional trading blocs have tried to establish a single global market through trade liberalization agreements. The positive outcome of integrated markets would be to secure peaceful international relations and technological innovation, such that these would benefit everybody. The internationalization of trade has developed in strong connection with the liberalization of financial transactions (Steger 2013, 42). In the context of economic globalization, there are three main international

economic institutions of key importance: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Steger 2013, 55).

Beyond the economic, political and cultural dimension, the intensification and expansion of social relations across space and time have generated and responded to the new “global crises” situated beyond the reach of the nation-state and its political institutions.

In addition to worldwide financial volatility and transnational terrorism, these new challenges include climate change and environmental degradation; increasing food scarcity; pandemics such as AIDS, SARS, and H1N1; threats to cyber-security; widening disparities in wealth and wellbeing; increasing migratory pressures; and manifold cultural and religious conflicts. (Steger 2013, 131-132)

The threats aforementioned raise a final question crucial in the examination of globalization: will these global crises eventually contribute to more extensive forms of international cooperation and interdependence, or will they stop the powerful momentum of globalization?

In order to diminish the negative effects of the process analysed here, the European Commission created in 2007 the European Globalization Adjustment Fund (EGF) which provides support to the people who lost their jobs as a result of structural changes due to globalization (European Commission 2014). This Fund can be used only by national and regional authorities and since its launch it has been utilized several times. Its main goal is “to express EU solidarity with workers affected by mass redundancies triggered by shifting world trade patterns”. The EGF is an important measure of economic policy practiced in the European Union in order to face the challenges of globalization (such as unemployment, losses in manufacturing, construction, agriculture and public administration).

In the matter of economic policy, especially in trade policy, Europe is important because of the fact that it remains the world’s largest market and trader (despite the rise of new economic powers like Brazil, India, and China). The EU is considered to be the prime driver of globalization (Young and Peterson 2014, 1) for different reasons: from its position of a trading power, it can better determine the consequences of globalization. Each specific trade policy of the EU presents a different structure based on a balance of economic power between it and its trade partner(s) (Young and Peterson 2014, 2). Being a global actor, it also sets the conditions of access to its market and started to be

preoccupied by trade policy. The EU trade policy is the main way of managing the impact of globalization on European citizens and the Union's contribution to the globalization process, whatever the merits of economic liberalization are (Young and Peterson 2014, 12).

When discussing about the influence of globalization in the European space, we should remember David Held's observation (1991, 154) who argues that the EU alliance "has actually helped the survival of the European nation-state faced with the dominance of the USA in the first three decades following the Second World War, and the rise of the Japanese economic challenge".

The European Commission underlined the "depth and quality" of trade relationships, leading to a focus on regulatory barriers to goods, services and the promotion of EU social values (Young and Peterson 2014, 64). The EU's largest trading partners are the US, China, Russia, Japan, India and Brazil (Council 1999). So, in March 2013 the EU began negotiating a free trade agreement with Japan (Panagariya 2002). A few months later, in July 2013, the EU began to negotiate with the US the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a transatlantic agreement which was seen as a solution for the economic crisis, a way of increasing competitiveness of European and American firms, and also a platform for the development of global rules (Allen and Smith 2004).

US and European policy towards Russia, has been based, so far, on several basic principles such as "peaceful resolution of disputes and mutual respect of each other's interdependence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity" (Weiss A. 2014). Taking into consideration that Russia changed its directions (by way of its intervention in Ukraine) new challenges appeared, and it seems that a new strategy is required in order to diminish its ability to threaten its neighbours. The US and the EU lead the battle through the threat of additional sanctions against key-sectors of the Russian economy, but this is not enough, hence the free trade agreement between the two partners could become an economic alliance against Russia, which might have substantial results. All in all, it can be said that in relation with Russia, both the EU and the US have to establish new policy directions, due especially to the decision of Russians to intervene in Ukraine. As a result, the relations with Russia have been suspended because of the crisis in Ukraine and this can be an extra incentive for signing TTIP and strengthening the EU-US political and economic relationship.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership – An Effect of Globalization?

In the context of globalization, the European Union makes a strong case for international engagement raising the talk of a new phase of globalization carrying with it new challenges and stronger international competition (Atlantic Council 2014). On September 8th, 2014, at the European Parliament's International Trade Committee meeting, the Italian vice-minister for Trade, Carlo Calenda, presented the priorities of the Italian Presidency of the European Council of Ministers. He explained, in terms of challenges and opportunities, what it means for the European Union to enter a new phase of globalization. It has two meanings which depend on whether the EU chooses to be an active shaper of the international policy or just a simple participant in the new global order (Atlantic Council 2014). If the EU wants to be active, it needs a clear trade policy in order to deliver growth and to foster the competitiveness of companies within. Calenda stresses that there are three trends that the EU needs to be aware of and take benefits from: “the shrinking production cost gap between advanced and emerging countries, which creates opportunities and financial incentives to relocate production back to the West”; “economic protectionist tendencies in emerging countries, widening the gap between protectionist and open markets” and “the increased demand for quality manufactured goods, which creates great opportunities for European companies with strong histories of producing top-quality goods” (Atlantic Council 2014).

Another important aspect of the new phase of globalization is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership discussion which represents a top priority in the US-EU cooperation. The problem concerning this issue seems to be the lack of transparency in the process of negotiations and the low involvement of civil society. TTIP has a great potential in reshaping the rules of international trade by promoting growth and jobs and by geopolitically redefining the transatlantic relationship. It is important to maintain the European integration and closer transatlantic cooperation, not only from the economic perspectives, but also from the geopolitical ones. In order to promote their values, and to set global international standards (Atlantic Council 2014), both the EU and the US should join a global partnership, TTIP being a big step in this direction.

The two largest markets in the world – the European Union and the United States of America – officially started the negotiation to establish a common free trade area (FTA) in July 2013. The aim of the TTIP is to help business activities across the Atlantic by eliminating tariffs and harmonizing the

regulatory standards. Once signed, the TTIP will establish the largest free trade area in history.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership should stimulate growth in Europe and US, according to its proponents (Capaldo 2014, 1). TTIP is seen as a solution to the economic and political crisis manifested both sides, but placing these vague promises at the core of negotiations, based only on the study realized by the Centre for Economic Policy Research (2013), makes this agreement less realistic. On the contrary, the official documents which have been elaborated so far show that the focus on jobs and growth is not the single goal of the agreement, this being only a strategy for limiting criticism and opposition in order to ensure the success of the TTIP.

Giving the fact that this agreement is one of the largest in history, its social, political and economic consequences influencing EU and US citizens, as well as societies of third world countries, it is imperative to study and analyse the debates of a variety of stakeholders and critics of the TTIP and its related negotiations. But why is this matter so important? Firstly, because the negotiations of this trade agreement have been taking place mostly behind closed doors and civil society was not involved in the negotiations, hence it relied only on limited information. This is the first critique of the negotiations for the TTIP (Cordoso 2013, 5). The negotiators are trying to eliminate the lack of transparency in order to let civil society get more information and be part of the decision making process. The civil societies from both the EU and the US, have the right to be informed and to be able to have an opinion for or against TTIP; they should have the same level of participation as corporations. The second problem is the way in which the transatlantic community is negotiating its agreements. There are some examples of agreements which were called ambiguous and in conflict of interest with a number of stakeholders. We may give here the example of The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), negotiated between Canada and the EU, which is applying the contents of its previous agreement, rejected by the civil society, namely the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). Another agreement of the same kind with great importance for the US is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), is being negotiated between the US and thirteen other Pacific countries. This agreement comprises even harsher terms and more restrictive intellectual property and copyright provisions than ACTA and CETA. We brought these trade agreements into discussion because the question of the nature of the transatlantic partners' negotiating mandate and goals should be raised.

In order to see how the negotiations for TTIP are structured we should use Putnam's two-level game (1988). According to it, only in international

treaty the domestic actors' pressure and lobby at the national level for the purpose of a favourable policy could be achieved. As it is well known, at the international level, the national governments are those who try to meet this domestic pressure put by a foreign government. In this case, both games are interconnected and the executive is in an advantageous bargaining position, due to the fact that it is the only actor playing at both levels (Janusch 2013a, 25). In addition, international negotiations can be divided in two temporal processes: before and after the signing of an agreement. Before the signing, there is one or several important rounds of negotiations between the executives at the international level in order to reach an agreement. However, during the international negotiation process, the executive already has had a discussion with the domestic actors – especially the legislature – in order to ensure the final approval of an agreement. Furthermore, there is also the situation when the legislature amends an agreement during the ratification process; therefore the renegotiations are necessary for the international system.

In the case of free trade agreements, the most visible progress at the international level is achieved during the negotiation round. In these types of negotiation, the teams from both sides meet for a week or for a few days alternately, in a city of the other negotiating partner. The teams of negotiators consist of different groups (specialists) for the main topics at interest. While the direct negotiations between the state actors are held in secret, there are also constant talks with national stakeholders in the so-called “side rooms”, dominated especially by the business sector (Janusch, 2013b). In almost every case of negotiations, before the first round, the trading partners have already held the pre-negotiations in order to see if the proposed trade agreement is possible. In the case of TTIP, the pre-negotiation was held in February 2013 and the official negotiations were launched in July 2013. The EU and the US have already passed through the first round and once the negotiations have officially started, a final conclusion might be possible. Also, there is the possibility of not reaching a conclusion.

When negotiating at the bilateral level, the EU makes use of its asymmetrical bargaining power (i.e. its market size) – in order to obtain concessions from other bargaining parties –, and its social power by setting standards, creating norms and values or imposing specific conditions on weaker partners (Moschella and Waver, 2014, 57). The EU has never been a leader like the US in the global trade regime. To be sure, the EU does exert influence in the world trade system by bringing certain issues into the negotiating agenda. Due to its market size of roughly 500million consumers, the EU is one of the most important players in the global economy (Moschella and Waver, 2014, 59).

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership has passed through eight rounds of negotiations. To see how and why the TTIP negotiations were structured the way they were, we should analyse the most important steps in its launching process and every round of its negotiations.

In March 2006, the European Commission released its twenty first annual report on barriers to trade and investment in the US, detailing the obstacles that EU exporters and investors were facing within the US market (European Commission 2006). In that report the non-tariff barriers in investment and public procurement were highlighted along with some long running WTO problems. In May 2009, The United States Trade Representative, Ron Kirk and the European Union Trade Commissioner, Catherine Ashton met in Washington DC to discuss bilateral trade relations aimed at intensifying their engagement in finding solutions that will bring economic benefits to workers, consumers, and businesses on both sides of the Atlantic (European Commission 2009a). In October 2009, in a speech to the US Chamber of Commerce in Washington DC, the European Commissioner for Trade, Catherine Ashton has called on policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic to make a common cause out of breaking down the regulatory barriers to trade. In her speech, ahead of the fourth meeting of the Transatlantic Economic Dialogue, Catherine Ashton argues that the two sides should break through a “glass ceiling” that has hindered the relationship from reaching its full potential (European Commission 2009b). She also stressed the fact that both sides of the Atlantic should push for a conclusion of the Doha Round if they want a trade agreement. As we all know the Doha Round conclusion failed and the next free trade agreements were its continuation. It is hoped that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership will be successful in order to break the so called circle of “successfully failed trade agreement”.

In December 2009, a study published by the European Commission concluded that tackling existing non-tariff measures (NTMs) for trade and investment between the EU and the US would bring substantial economic benefits on both sides of the Atlantic (European Commission 2009c). The issue of different approaches to non-tariff measures is an important part of the EU's international competitiveness strategy.

In March 2010, the European Commissioner for Trade, Karel De Gucht met the Ambassador Ron Kirk, the US Trade Representative for the first time, in order to express his desire to continue the strong transatlantic cooperation on trade policy and to draw the most important strategic aspects of the bilateral and multilateral cooperation. They concluded their meeting by asserting the fact that “in these difficult economic times, it is essential to deepen the transatlantic trade

market to boost growth” and that “together, we will have the opportunity to shape the challenges of globalization” (European Commission 2010). The European Union and the United States are each other’s most important trading partner and that is why a trade agreement between them is both a challenge and a great opportunity.

After long talks and meetings between Trade Representatives of the European Union and the United States, these two potential partners have decided to take their economic relation on a higher level by launching, in 2013, the negotiations for a comprehensive trade and investment agreement in order to conclude the biggest bilateral trade deal ever negotiated (European Commission 2013c).

The first round of TTIP negotiations started in Washington DC with an opening plenary session emphasizing the importance of the negotiations and laying out the plans for the round. The negotiators discussed about investment, government procurement, cross-border services, and textiles, rules of origin, energy, raw materials and legal issues (European Commission 2013d). The initial positions on the regulatory part of TTIP were presented and the negotiators prepared the ground for the next rounds which were expected to be more productive. There were also certain areas of convergence on various components of the negotiating process, as well as some areas of divergence; yet the parties started to explore the possibilities to bridge the gaps in order to have a strong collaboration.

The second round of negotiations, which was programmed during 7-11 October 2013, in Brussels, was cancelled due to some problems in the US administration, and was rescheduled for November 2013. In this round, the discussions revolved around services, investment, energy, raw materials, and regulatory issues. The conclusions of the second round of negotiations held that by improving the regulatory cooperation between the European Union and the United States similar regulations on both sides of the Atlantic will be created and the partners would also manage to readapt them on a later stage. The negotiators’ goal was to build a more integrated marketplace, while respecting each side’s right to regulate in a way that ensures the protection of health, safety and the environment at a level it considers appropriate.

On the third round of negotiations, held in Washington DC, in December 2013, the negotiators focused on a broad range of issues (European Commission 2013e), such as: liberalization of the trade of goods; making it easier to invest in each other’s economies; opening up trade in services, energy and raw materials; making it easier to sell in each other’s markets by making the respective regulation more compatible and enabling the EU and US regulators

to work more closely together in the future. At this meeting they set out in detail each other's tasks in order to have a fourth, more productive round.

In March 2014 a fourth round of TTIP negotiations started in Brussels. The discussions touched on different aspects, such as services, labour, and rules of origin, intellectual property and regulatory sectors. Meanwhile, some meetings with stakeholder were also organized in order to keep them informed about the main topics discussed so that they could form their options more easily.

The fifth round of negotiations was held in May 2014 in Virginia, US, and the issues discussed belonged to several areas, such as regulatory coherence, intellectual property rights, labour and the environment, various sectorial regulatory areas. There were some additional groups which were discussing services and investment – with the exception of investment protection and investor state dispute settlement, technical barriers to trade, agricultural market access, and rules of origin. In order to understand how these two partners are negotiating the TTIP, a new independent study written by two US and European scholars and published by the European Commission in 2014 was meant to offer a unique comparison of the EU and US regulatory and legislative systems. The study analysed the different steps in regulatory processes on both sides of the Atlantic (Parker and Alemanno 2014). It also emphasized the impact assessment/cost-benefit analysis, stakeholder consultations and international regulatory cooperation on TTIP.

The discussions for the sixth rounds of negotiations of TTIP were hosted in Brussels, in July 2013. During this round, the negotiators continued their discussions on issues such as: trade in goods and services, regulatory issues, government procurement, environmental protection and labour rights, energy and raw materials, and opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises. The discussions were more elaborated in terms of getting to a common measure concerning regulatory issues. All subjects debated were approached in a more technical fashion in order to prepare the ground for the political decision that need to be taken at the end of negotiations.

The EU-US trade agreement discussions on the TTIP at the seventh round were held in October 2013 in Washington DC. The negotiators said at the end that the talks were productive and that they were moving smoothly into the textual phase in which the discussions would be based on the specific textual proposal. This time, both parties approached the issue of the regulatory pillar by way of settling the standards, strategic dimensions and compatibility of proposals. There were also discussions concerning the stakeholders and some representatives of the civil society in order to maintain the promises of

eliminating the lack of transparency. Attention was also focused on the political context and its impact on the TTIP negotiations and the impact of negotiations on the actual political context.

The eighth round of negotiations was scheduled for February 2015 in Brussels and it was held from February 2 to February 6. The main objective of the meeting was to settle on a political direction for the agreement throughout 2015 because the talks must progress as much as possible this year so the negotiators have already scheduled intense work for upcoming months.

After shortly presenting the eight rounds of TTIP negotiations and the most important themes discussed we can draw the conclusion that is difficult for the US and the EU to get to a conclusion and to harmonize their regulations on different issues, such as tariff elimination, services liberalization, public procurement and regulatory cooperation. Both the EU and US have a “rules-based” trading system and both want a “high level of protection for their people from risks to their health, safety, financial security and environment”. There are areas where the EU and US have different views, such as hormones in meat, GMOs, the energy consumption of cars, nanotechnology and privacy issues. The talks are focused on finding a regulation policy for both sides of the Atlantic on these problematic issues. The US and EU are trying to find solutions on the regulatory issues in order to obtain the trade liberalization and the elimination of barriers. Looking at the measures negotiated, we can notice the effects of globalization in terms of uniformization and harmonization of the world’s economy reflected in the discussions around the agreement. .

A Comparative Analysis: Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

The relationship between Europe and America evolves constantly, in response to both international developments and political changes on each side of the Atlantic (Peterson and Pollack 2003). Both parties involved had the opportunity to conclude the negotiations for a “strategic partnership” and they have almost done it.

The negotiations of these trade agreements are taking place in a new era of free trade and globalization and this is the reason why this part of this paper focuses on the two most important free trade agreements that are being negotiated by the US with the 13 countries from Asia-Pacific region (TPP) and with the European Union (TTIP). Simultaneously, both the EU and the US have tried to conclude bilateral free trade agreements all over the world, in the last

years, at the same time also being preoccupied by their own interests (the US-politicians were turning their attention towards the Asia-Pacific region and the Europeans were preoccupied with themselves). This attitude was perceived by the Atlanticists as a weakening of the transatlantic relationship and it has sometimes been considered critical towards European integration (Choblet and Hager 2013, 9).

On one side, TTIP negotiations are taking place in a context in which globalization is at the core of debates, context that could become a new phase of free trade. As it is well known, the multilateral Doha Development Rounds were blocked and the EU and US need to conclude bilateral free trade agreements all over the world (Dadush, 2013). Their attempts had as their peak the negotiations of the TTIP.

On the other side, Japan's decision to join the TPP in 2013 and the launching of negotiations between the US and the EU aimed at reaching a comprehensive trade and investment agreement made the global trade policy enter a new stage. In 2013, EU and Japan started negotiations on a bilateral trade agreement and thus the circle was closed. Due to their size, these economic blocs have the power to reshape the world economy and the potential to have significant economic and geopolitical implications. The lack of transparency remains a problem in the negotiations process and makes the access to the results of discussions difficult. In order to understand the issues that are currently under negotiation, their importance and the relation with globalization effects, this section aims to provide a comparative perspective on TTIP and TPP, bringing into discussion some aspects of the EU-Japan agreement.

What follows is a short presentation of both trade agreements in order to see which are the most important aspects, the actors and the gains expected of TPP and TTIP.

What is TPP?

The announcement of participation of the United States in the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations was made by the President Obama in November 2009. The negotiation of this partnership between the United States and the other 11 (13 from 2013) countries is a big step in their economic policy. Thus TPP could become the most promising agreement for Asia-Pacific regional trade integration. The Asia-Pacific markets are growing because they represent key-destinations for the US manufactured goods, agricultural products and services suppliers; so the TPP will deepen trade and investment. In order to

support job creation and economic growth, TPP will be a comprehensive deal which provides new and meaningful market access for goods and services, labour standards and environmental commitments, which are some of the most important aspects of global economy.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is considered to be another ambitious trade agreement of the 21st century which is negotiated between the United States and another 13 countries from the Asia-Pacific region. These countries are: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan (the latter three from 2013). The purpose of this trade agreement is to enlarge the possibilities of “American workers, families businesses, farmers, and ranchers by providing increased access to some of the fastest growing markets in the world” (Office of the United States Trade Representatives 2014).

TPP will be a provider of access to markets for the goods and services made in America, it will increase the labour standards and will set new rules for a balanced intellectual property rights framework. Another important aspect of the TPP is the fact that it is also focusing on the “commitments that will improve the transparency and consistency of the regulatory environment to make it easier for small and medium-sized businesses to operate across the region” (Office of the United States Trade Representatives 2014). By its measures, TPP will help the Americans to keep a strong connection with their competitors from a vital region of the world. However, TPP represents a big opportunity for the US in the highly competitive global marketplace, meaning that even a small increases in a products’ cost due to existent barriers (tariffs or non-tariffs) can make the difference between a successful and a failing business. This is one of the reason that the United States is negotiating the TPP and wants to be a “comprehensive and preferential access across an expensive duty-free trading region for the industrial goods, food and agriculture products, and textiles, which will allow to the American exporters to develop and expand their participation in the value chains of the fastest-growing economies in the world” (Office of the United States Trade Representatives 2014).

TPP is one of the free trade agreements that the US wants to negotiate in the 21st century. This agreement represents the first step in the expansion of the American economy and exports all over the world. The next free trade agreements on the list of negotiations are with China, India and the EU. After the elimination of TPP tariffs imposed on manufactured products by the participating countries, which include innovative and high technology products, industrial and electrical machinery, precision and scientific instruments, chemical and plastics, the US products will be exported on other markets.

In the negotiation of the TPP, the US trade representative stresses the importance of two aspects (Office of the United States Trade Representatives 2014): the elimination of tariffs and commercially-meaningful market access for US products exported to TPP countries and of the provisions that address longstanding non-tariff barriers, including import licensing requirements and other restrictions. The Trans-Pacific Partnership imposed measures on different areas, such as trade in goods, textiles, services, investment, labour, environment, e-commerce and telecommunications, competition policy and state-owned enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises, intellectual property rights, technical barriers to trade and sanitary and phytosanitary measures, transparency, anticorruption and regulatory coherence, customs, trade facilitation and rules of origin, government procurement, development and trade capacity-building, dispute settlement, US-Japan bilateral negotiations on motor vehicle trade and non-tariff measures.

What is TTIP?

To find out what is TTIP and why it is so important for the US and EU but also for the rest of the world interested by the global economy, we should go back in time to see what are the most important steps that had led to today's negotiations. The project of TTIP can be considered as following a series of agreements settled back in the '90s that lost their status in the meantime (Siebert 2013). The idea of a strong transatlantic relation through a partnership has been debated since Germany took over the EU-presidency in 2007. The transatlantic project was revived by setting up the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) (Techau, 2013). The TEC is the preliminary work for the joint High Level Working Group (HLWG), and the foundation for the current negotiations (European Commission 2013a; US Department of State, 2013). After the end of the Cold War, the relationship between the EU and the US was revitalized being named a so-called "period of fundamental reorientation" (Varwick 2008, 520). The US is still a strong individual economic, political and military actor, but in the economic field, the EU represents a challenge.

The European Atlanticists consider that the US's move for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a weakening move of the transatlantic relations (Frankenberger 2012; Parello-Plesner 2013). But the possible gains of this trade agreement and the future ones from the TTIP, in the way that both the US and EU benefit from trade agreements, can change the perspective of skeptics. In the last few years the EU tried to become an independent global actor and the first step was the European integration, the process which has an

explicit aim, not only to tear down economic frontiers within EU, but also between the EU and some third world countries. Another important step was the initiation of its own free trade agreements, independently of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. There are several important agreements settled between the EU and a couple Latin American states, Japan, India and the US (European Commission, 2013b). In the case of US, the trade agreements are concluded with Asian states among others (Siebert, 2013, 14).

A Comparative Perspective TTP-TTIP

The global trade policy is shaped by two important trade agreements in which strategic partners are involved. In its way of lowering the common trade barriers such as tariffs, the TTIP and TPP also aim to establish new rules, standards and procedures in many areas that have not been covered in the multilateral trade liberalization rounds of the WTO.

Politicians, scientists, journalists and civil society pay attention to the ambitious aim of the TTIP and TPP. However the TTIP is the only bilateral trade agreement with global dimension and expectations that is under scholars' attention. The negotiations for TPP started in 2006, and in 2013 reached a new stage when Japan decided to join (VerWey 2013). The TPP was seen at the centre of the US trade strategy (Barfield 2011) because of its ambitious trade liberalization agenda. With Japan on the board, the TPP has the potential to become the most important trade agreement on the globe. Both, the TTIP and the TPP, are in the forefront of global trade policy and have the possibility to determine the future of global trading and rules not only for the participating countries, but also for the rest of the world. There is still a problem regarding these trade agreements, in terms of fragility, and we can look at the growing opposition of civil society to the TTIP in Europe, or at the resistance of agribusiness interests to the TTP in a number of Asian countries (Bello and Fazi 2014). These are matters the leaders of the negotiating powers should pay attention to.

In order to understand one agreement, either the TPP or TTIP, it is necessary to analyse and compare both of them. The progress made in the negotiation process is important for both trade agreements, especially when failure is in the background. Matthew Rimmer (2013) discussed the concurrence between the TPP and the TTIP and concluded: "Both treaties will be mutually reinforcing. The United States Trade Representative will use the twin treaties to play participants and regions off against one other, and push for higher standards and obligations". This statement shows the necessity of a comparative

perspective of TTIP-TPP in order to point out the similar patterns and interests, as well as the differences in trade policies of the EU, US and Japan (as an important factor in the TPP negotiations).

The EU, US and Japan leaders have been promoting bilateral and multilateral trade agreements for different reasons be they political, strategic or economic ones. Using the opinion of Clyde Prestowitz (2013), a former adviser in the Reagan and Clinton administration, we may notice the importance of the trade agreements: “As with most trade deals, both the TPP and the TTIP have geopolitical as well as economic significance”. When we are looking at the economic aspects of these we might observe the obvious similarities: they both aim to abolish tariffs in order to increase the trade volume between partner countries, they want to reduce the non-tariff barriers such as the technical ones and sanitary measures. TPP and TTIP have also in common methods to further facilitate trade relations such as harmonization and mutual recognition of standards, procedures and regulations across industries (WTO 2012, 150). Furthermore, the reduction of non-tariff barriers is and will remain at the core of the trade agreements negotiations (Sunesen et al. 2010).

The lack of transparency is the most obvious similarity between the negotiations of TPP and TTIP and the public protests against it has surrounded each round of negotiations. The civil society’s opinion is that the issues negotiated by TPP and TTIP are not only about free trade, but also about asserting corporate control over every aspect of people’s lives, through intellectual property rights and investor-state arrangements, in which “the sovereign rights of states are curtailed by the ability of corporations to sue them”(Bello and Fazi 2014).

As it was mentioned earlier, among the reasons of trade agreement negotiations there are political, economic and geopolitical ones. For example, the TPP is considered to be the most important trade agreement of the US administration on the Pacific-Asia region, and its importance is political, as well as symbolic. At this point one should mention an important and common aspect of the bilateral and multilateral agreements: their nature of being discriminatory with others understood in terms of their discriminatory economic effects that are often accompanied by political discrimination. In the case of TTIP and TPP, the political and strategic motives behind the trade agreement are in strong connection with their national interest and their broader foreign policy strategy.

From the geopolitical perspective, both treaties have important goals: the TTIP can be considered an economic arm of NATO and “is clearly aimed at containing Russia” (Bello and Fazi 2014). On the other side, the TPP can be considered an attempt to contain China, and also to create “an opposite

economic bloc of Asia” (Bello and Fazi 2014). Therefore one may say that TTIP and TPP share a geopolitical goal and this is the elimination of BRICS countries, especially China, from the scene of international trade. Even if China is a great economic power, a significant partner of Japan, EU and US, it is not included in these trade agreements that are considered the most important in the world economy. The reason of the elimination of China is under debate and oscillates between the wish of old trade partners to protect their challenged positions and the normal procedures in such trade agreements.

TPP and TTIP are two potential free trade agreements that offer the US and the EU the opportunity to establish their positions in trade policy as global actors and to put China under pressure. Both, EU and US want to set up global standards for industry, labour and environment, hoping that other countries will follow their wish to build a competitive marketplace.

Besides the similarities between the TPP and TTIP, there are also some important differences that should be mentioned. First of all, the TPP is an open trade agreement, while the TTIP is a closed trade agreement (open only for the negotiating partners, US and EU). Secondly, the TPP is addressing the types of issues that US has included in its past FTAs (market access for goods and services, the protection of intellectual property, strong investment protection, and government procurement). Some other expected areas to be negotiated are competition with state-owned enterprises, the protection of cross-border data flows, and regulatory cooperation. The TPP countries have also agreed to use the US approach of negotiating services, financial services and investment commitments. The TTIP negotiations, on the other hand, are focused on the elimination of tariffs on trade, the non-tariff barriers on the flow of goods (including agricultural goods), improving market access on trade and services, promoting greater compatibility, cooperation and transparency (by reducing the cost of differences in regulations and standards) (Business Roundtable 2014).

In comparing the timelines of concluding the negotiations for TTP and TTIP, we should bring into discussion the years before the launching of the negotiations for these trade agreements and the evolutions of the talks. The intention of the US to participate in the negotiations for TPP was manifested in 2009 and so far there have been over twenty rounds of negotiations and the trade agreement is not yet concluded. The negotiations for the TTIP were launched in July 2013 and so far there have been eight rounds of negotiations and the US and the EU have still a lot of issues to negotiate. Negotiators of both trade agreements collectively wish to conclude the negotiations as soon as possible.

It was proved throughout history that agreements negotiated in secrecy often fail to get ratified. TPP and TTIP are trade agreements that expand the provisions governing intellectual property protection and investments and go even further by including such regulation in the enterprises policy. These issues were addressed in an open transparent manner that involved the stakeholders. Usually, a regulatory body will solicit public input on a proposed regulation, and a draft regulation will be made public in order to get some feedback before deciding the final regulation. This happens because these issues are not traditional trade ones. The non-traditional issues are extremely complex and the negotiators should pay more attention because they should thoroughly know the themes to be discussed. The stakeholders are involved in the discussions because they are specialized on these issues and they can provide the information needed.

While there is an explanation for the negotiations of traditional trade issues behind closed doors, the non-traditional issues, such as intellectual property, investment and regulations, should be negotiated with more transparency. All proposals of non-traditional issues should be made public. For example, the negotiations over the regulations or intellectual property protection are an issue of public policy that cannot be achieved in secret.

As a conclusion it could be said that both free trade agreements need more transparency in negotiations, more public input and realistic expected gains in order to have a positive impact on society.

Conclusions

Over the last twenty-five years and especially with the end of the Cold War, the world has experienced a rapid evolution to a more interdependent economy. Further on, globalization has penetrated the political arena at both the domestic and international level (Hall and Lawson 2011, 93). Economic freedom makes a difference in everyone's lives. It enables people acquire property, voluntarily trade with others, reward entrepreneurs who develop products and services that enrich the lives of their customers and create useful resources out of what would have otherwise been wasted (Hall and Lawson 2011, 41).

From a strategic perspective, globalization refers to actors' attempts to promote the global coordination of activities on a continuing basis within, but not necessarily across, different institutional orders or functional system (Olds and Dicken 1999, 22).

The negotiations for the free trade agreements are at the core of global economy of the 21st century. Despite the actual economic crisis, the US and EU are each other's most important markets, in term of generating jobs and growth on both sides of the Atlantic. The need of a balanced global trade has put the world's biggest economies in the situation of negotiating free trade agreements like Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

If all the announced objectives of the TTIP will be implemented, the result will be the creation of a transatlantic free trade market (Siebert 2013, 2). Some economists doubt that TTIP could really have positive results, or a significant importance (Siebert 2013, 10). With the measures of TTIP in practice, the trade would be diverted from the European area toward a transatlantic one, with focus on lower regulation of EU-US trade.

The European Commission sustains the TTIP with two strong arguments. The first one is the positive consequences for jobs and growth expected from this agreement. Some of the most important gains of the TTIP are supposed to be in the economic area: for the EU (€119 billion a year) and for the US (€95 billion a year) once the transatlantic agreement is fully implemented (European Commission 2013f). The gains from liberalizing trade between the EU and the US will also be felt by the rest of the world (the GDP will be increased by almost €100 billion) (European Commission 2013f). Another important result of the US-EU trade agreement is the establishment of new transatlantic standards and increased trade (between EU and US). The exports would increase in almost all sectors such as metal products, processed foods, chemicals, motor vehicles, other manufactured goods and other transport equipment (European Commission 2013f). The non-tariff barriers will be eliminated, the level of economic activity and production will increase, and the sustainable use of natural resources (European Commission 2013f) will be promoted if the negotiations for the transatlantic partnership would be concluded. Global trade rules will be set by the TTIP on both sides of the Atlantic. Another argument of the European Commission is the fact that the agreement will not affect the quality of life in the way that it will not lower safety, environmental and health standards and it will not harm, but it will bring significant benefits for the rest of the world (European Commission, 2013b). The prerequisite of achieving these benefits is the success of the agreement in harmonizing a large share of divergent EU-US standards. On the other hand, we should also be aware of the negative aspects of this agreement. There is an alternative regulatory convergence strategy that will be pursued: in the case of mutual recognition, this might contribute to more trade, but the result will not be

seen in the global standards (European Commission, 2013b). The result might be some deregulations with negative effects on the rest of the world. Trade policy regulates the conditions on which goods and services can enter the EU's (single) market, so the EU must maintain a strong cooperation with the global economies (Jacoby and Meunier 2010, 302) and should do more in order to protect its citizens from the adverse effects of globalization (Smith 2000, 332). In conclusion, the TPP will bring important economic and strategic benefits for the US and will encourage more countries to join the partnership. The Asia-Pacific region is important for the US because of its rapid evolution in the world, much like a key-driver of global economic growth. The difference between the gains of the TTIP and the TPP is the fact that the US would benefit from both trade agreements. The TTIP is a bilateral trade agreement with "closed doors", but the TPP is a multilateral trade agreement with "open doors" for other countries.

The United States and the European Union share a huge, dynamic, and mutually beneficial economic partnership. Not only are trade and investment ties between the two partners huge in absolute terms, but the EU share of US global trade and investment flows has remained high and relatively constant over time, despite the rise of Asian trade and investment flows. These robust commercial ties provide consumers on both side of the Atlantic with major benefits in terms of jobs and access to capital and new technologies (Wilkens 2010, 21). Giving the high level of commercial interactions, trade tensions and disputes are not unexpected. In the past, the EU-US trade relations have experienced periodic episodes of rising trade tensions and conflicts, only to be followed by successful efforts at dispute settlement. Policymakers and many academics tend to maintain that the US and EU have more in common than in dispute (Wilkens 2010, 22-23).

In this point of negotiations, there are still more questions than answers regarding the two trade agreements. TPP started like a preferential trade agreement (PTA) between Chile, New Zealand, and Singapore in 2005. On the other side, the TTIP is seen as the next step in the transatlantic trade regulations policy. Both trade agreements represent an evolution of the preferential trade agreements which should cover deeper issues of trade integration such as investment, regulations, and services. Many trade agreements are seeking to establish new rules in the multilateral trading system. The problems is that some issues, such as trade facilitation, appears to work, but others, such as intellectual property rights, competition and state-owned enterprises, labour laws, environmental protection and even currency manipulation, need more attention.

Greater collaboration and alignment of US and EU approaches towards addressing global economic challenges, such as completing the Doha Round, dealing with China's trade barriers, and reducing global imbalances, remain all work in progress. Given the shared interests in opening emerging markets to industrial goods and services, business interests have urged US and EU negotiators to work more closely together to press other countries for more concessions (Ahrens 2012, 74).

According to some, closer US-EU cooperation in addressing the problems posed by China's interventionist policies could facilitate pragmatic solutions and successful outcomes if China's leaders understood there was no distance between US and EU positions. In this view, a divided US-EU economic policy approach to China could allow it to play one side against the other (Ahrens 2012, 74).

To sum up, we all can see that the landscape of the global trade policy is in a continuous change. With the two trade projects launched, like TPP and TTIP, the EU and the US, have put their ambitions in the comprehensive trade liberalization agenda. In this paper we tried to expose the most important aspects of the process of globalization in the context of the most important free trade agreements of the 21st century in order to see if the process of globalization has an influence on the launching of negotiations of TPP and TTIP. From a comparative perspective, we saw that TPP and TTIP share similar economic goals, but their most important similarity is represented by their way of choosing negotiating partners, which is politically motivated by the fact that they want to exclude from their strategy of balancing the international trade another economic world power, namely China.

The expected gains of TPP and TTIP could be positive for the countries involved, but for non-participants, especially the economic partners of the US and EU, could bring big losses in trade and investment policy. The question that arises here is whether TPP and TTIP will set a negotiation model with fewer players instead of requiring all WTO members to agree. There is also a background with smaller groups in the World Trade Organization which have negotiated the government procurement agreement, the information technology agreement and other issues. If the negotiations for the TPP or TTIP fail what will happen with the participants? Will they be discouraged and drop trade negotiations entirely or will they turn back towards bi- or some other multilateral agreements?

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