

Media and Society: Politics in Cyberspace - A Study in Cyberculture

Luís Cardoso¹, Lígia Neves²

¹Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre and Centre for Comparative Studies of the University of Lisbon, Portugal

²Media and Society Master, Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre, Portalegre, Portugal

ABSTRACT

This article aims to understand the importance of cyberspace, namely social networks, in news coverage during election times. To this end, a contextualization about Cyberculture and Cyberspace will be made, as well as politics in this space, and social networks as media platforms. It is intended to demonstrate that in cyberspace, political communication has gained a new way of reaching voters and that the Internet has revolutionized the relationship between journalism and politics and politics with voters.

KEYWORDS: *Media and Society, Cyberculture, Cyberspace, Politics, Journalism, Social networks*

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, Cyberspace, which Lévy presents as an information-sharing network, is a means of communication that is part of the society in which we live. This is because Cyberculture is a reality that, increasingly, citizens have joined. With a large part of citizens inserted in this virtual space, through which they establish relationships and communicate with each other, institutions/organizations must try to remain active in it, in order to reach their target audience, quickly and effectively. These institutions include political organizations, as well as politicians themselves, who must take advantage of the communication tools that Cyberspace leverages, so that they can get their ideas, messages and actions to their voters, especially because, according to Rüdger, this space is based building social bonds.

In the case of media, whose main function is to keep society informed, it is important that they also remain active in this virtual space. One of the ways of sharing and disseminating information on the internet is social networks, which journalists have been using more and more, as mentioned by Canavilhas, with several newspapers present in them, as these are platforms that allow the rapid spread of information. information, which reaches a large number of individuals. Knowing that both fields - Politics and Journalism - should take advantage of the potential of Cyberspace in what are their missions, it is

important to understand how the media use the network to transmit information of a political nature.

CYBERCULTURE AND CYBERSPACE

Bearing in mind that we live in a society in which technological advances are more and more frequent, the concept of Cyberculture is constantly changing. However, the concept presented by Pierre Lévy, a French philosopher, in his book entitled "Cyberculture", has been the starting point for other scholars of cyberculture and cyberspace. According to the author, "Cyberculture" specifies the set of techniques (material and intellectual), practices, attitudes, ways of thinking and values that develop together with the growth of cyberspace" (Lévy, 1999: 16).

Resulting from the combination of the words "cybernetics" and "culture", the neologism Cyberculture designates a movement resulting, as Rosa explains, from the "massification of digital computers, their network connection accompanied by the popularization of the Internet and, still, certain scientific technologies that have also become known to the general public in the last decade" (Rosa, nd: 1). This is because, according to the author, it was between 1990 and 1996 that several texts on the subject appeared.

Therefore, to understand Cyberculture, it is also important to understand the concept of Cyberspace. For Lévy, this

consists of a network of information fed by the humans who navigate it:

Cyberspace (which I will also call 'network') is the new means of communication that emerges from the worldwide interconnection of computers. The specific term not only the material infrastructure of digital communication but also the oceanic universe of information that it houses, as well as the human beings that navigate and feed this universe" (Lévy, 1999: 15)

For the author, Cyberspace works as a support for collective intelligence, since it allows the transmission of information between different internet users.

Champangnante and Cavalcanti describe this "virtual space" as a territory without borders, in which the receivers also become transmitters, taking into account that Cyberspace enables the participation of users:

Cyberspace emerges as a territory without borders, apparently without controls and hierarchies, in which there are no fixed or linear points for the dissemination of information. In this sense, there are conditions for contents to be produced and distributed instantly, in a horizontal / all-all dynamic, in which the contents are not subject to a uniform unifying and centralizing power of the vertical / one-all type, thus stimulating disruption. with monopolies for the elaboration/distribution of information. (Champangnante et Cavalcanti, 2015: 314).

Trivinho explains that the concept of Cyberculture is not just about cyberspace, but about the context in which it arises:

The concept of cyberculture, working to its full extent, is not equated only with the internal processes of cyberspace - it is worth specifying, it does not only involve virtual communities', behavioural trends, gender issues, new forms of identity and identification, body condition, publications and virtual libraries, web art, etc. -; more than that, it concerns a structural and structuring arrangement of the time that covers the very technological context responsible for the appearance of cyberspace. (Trivinho, 2001: 112)

Thus, Trivinho characterizes Cyberculture as "the world in progress, in all sectors" (idem). In this sense, Rüdger also recognizes this movement as the process resulting from technological advances and its implications in society and the daily lives of individuals, "cyberculture became the fear that the most elaborate conscience started to resort to account for the processes and situations that arose daily around communication informatics and its cybernetic mechanisms" (2011: 47).

Therefore, the objective of Cyberculture would be to build social bonds through the sharing made possible by the Internet, as explained by the professor mentioned above, "Cyberculture would therefore be a product of the aspiration to build a social bond founded on the meeting around centres of private interests, in the sharing of small knowledge, in more cooperative piecemeal learning and collaborative synergy processes" (Rüdger, 2011: 52).

It is in this sense that the author presents a paradox: the fact that Cyberculture is universal but without totality:

(...) Universal, since the interconnection must extend to everyone, anyone must be able to access the various virtual communities and their products from anywhere; but without totality, because the process would be unfinished and dispersed in principle: the sources are more and more heterogeneous, the mutant mechanisms and the perspectives of appropriation of all this only tend to multiply. (Rüdger, 2011: 52).

Lemos emphasizes the importance of cyberculture as a connection tool, since "cyberculture loosens its bonds and develops in an omnipresent way, making it no longer the user who travels to the network, but the network that starts to involve users and objects in a generalized connection" (Lemos, 2005: 2).

In this way, it is possible to understand that Cyberspace lives by sharing information, information that is diverse and endless. It is, therefore, necessary to take into account the positive and negative aspects that this phenomenon entails:

On the one hand, cyberspace allows not only the sharing and participation of users but also interactive research, ease of access and the preservation of memory, as explained by Lima et al, "with the tools for retrieving information in cyberspace, it expands not only the interactive search capabilities of the collection but also the convenience of accessing it remotely" (Lima et al, 2009: 6).

On the other hand, Rüdger explains that it is necessary to think about the information that circulates in Cyberspace:

Thematic networks and their cyberspaces attract and seduce us because, except in extraordinary conditions, they restrict our responsibility, perception and understanding of the world, dependent on the insertion, engagement and vulnerability of the body in concrete situations that can be shared with our fellow human beings - but it is just that which, among others, gives us good reasons to proceed with your investigation. (2011: 59).

It is, therefore, essential that we try to verify the veracity of the information that is provided to us online, to try to avoid phenomena resulting from excess information, as is the case with fake news. Bearing in mind that the internet has been increasingly present in the daily lives of citizens, society has sought to transport its practices to cyberspace. Such is the case of politics that has been progressively seeking to carry out online communication and political propaganda strategies, where debate, interactivity and content sharing happen quickly and reach a large number of people.

POLITICS IN CYBERSPACE

In cyberspace, political communication has gained a new way to reach voters. Bearing in mind that several people use the internet to obtain information, namely the young ones, political actors must be present on it. Therefore, politicians, or their communicators, should not, when drawing up their communication strategies, forget digital communication:

Cyberspace is the ideal place to get the message of political actors to voters, given their characteristics, namely the Web. Besides, as the Internet usage rate starts to be high and, once political communication passes by the media, campaigns must be carried out on the Web, as the use and gratification of the use of the medium makes them increasingly interested in seeking information about politics" (Rodrigues, 2010: 1)

We must also consider that the communication that comes from political institutions also passes through the media. Advisers use different communication strategies to get messages out to the media, including taking advantage of social networks and mobile devices. According to Rodrigues, "the internet allows interaction between social actors, giving greater freedom of expression to citizens and other small political forces" (2010: 3), which is not always the case with traditional media, as they have more access restricted than that made possible by cyberspace. Gomes explains that the internet "brought with it enormous expectations concerning the renewal of the possibilities for democratic participation" (2005: 63). When we think about Democracy, like the participation of all citizens in political decisions, we must also consider Cyberdemocracy:

Cyberdemocracy is not only the use of democratic practices, articulating the practices existing in the territorial space to those that can be made in cyberspace. It is not a matter of complementing territorial actions, extending some of them to cyberspace, but reorganizing them so that both ones are important for political development. (Rodrigues, 2010: 3)

Rodrigues explains that cyberdemocracy is not limited to e-government, but the use of the internet as a means of expressing the exercise of citizenship and democracy, through the interactive potentialities that it makes available. Bearing in mind that, thanks to cyberspace, messages, in the communication processes, have become bidirectional and non-unidirectional, communication has become interactive, which, "works well in the political field, since politics involves debate, discussion of ideas and reflection" (Rodrigues, 2010: 5).

In this sense, Gomes agrees that interactivity is fundamental to the democratic quality of a society, "it becomes a key part of the argument regarding the democratic quality of a society" (2005: 68). Using Hacker, the author explains that "the notion of political interactivity anchored on the internet refers to continuous communication and reciprocal initiative between the civil sphere and political agents, a communication that should serve for reciprocal feedback between citizens and political society" (Hacker in Gomes, 2005: 68).

According to Canavilhas, the image that citizens have of politicians is created through the information transmitted to them by the various communication devices and the media is the "favourite" device of politicians, due to their ability to influence public opinion, even if they are the device that can least be influenced by politicians. However, Gomes considers that information that is transmitted through networks is more diverse than that which is worked on by the media, in addition to access being easier and cheaper:

Political information on computer networks is more varied than industrial information, as it contains not only the record of current news selected and edited by the field of journalism but also all sorts of record of political facts and acts from the past [...] besides, networked political information is available for faster, cheaper and more convenient access than industrial political information (Gomes, 2005: 66)

These facts are also reinforced during the electoral period. It is at this point that politicians seek to gain even more visibility with voters, so it is when they resort most to mass communication, "candidates strive to occupy all available spaces: they invest in free advertising hours, participate in television debates and they grant numerous interviews" (Marques, 2016: 47). It is in this sense that these actors invest more and more in the practice of online campaigns, being the easiest way to spread a message.

CONCLUSION

With the globalization of cyberspace, the way people communicate is also changing. Communication networks are created that allow information to reach different audiences, without time or space limits. We speak of social networks. Steganha (2010) explains that with computers, and any other digital devices, people's way of communicating has changed, emerging new forms of communication and relationship. Since these new ways of communicating have come to affect journalism, it has been adapting to this reality, through social networks:

In addition to enhancing the networked society, these devices have proven to be useful for journalism, among other things, in the process of checking information, anticipating important facts, collaborating with exclusive photos and videos, and the repercussion of published materials and also in promoting discussions of issues that deserve the population's attention (Steganha, 2010: 44)

The new model of communication generated by the networked society presents changes concerning the traditional model of communication, essentially about interpersonal communication. Cardoso and Lamy describe it as "a model characterized by a new interpersonal network, from one to many and mass, which connects audiences, participants, users, broadcasting companies and publishers under a single media network matrix" (2011: 76). Therefore, the authors come to online social networks:

A way not only to reach the debate not achieved in traditional media but a way of achieving civic participation, where common interests allow the gathering of opinions, decisions and interventions in specific matters " (Cardoso and Lamy, 2011: 81).

This is because the debate on social networks is greater. Information can reach a larger number of people, who can share and comment on it. In addition to this dissemination of information happening more quickly, at the distance of a simple touch:

In social networks, the exchange of messages takes place primarily according to a dynamic of all for all, public. The content is, in most cases,

available for universal access. Thus, the level of information sharing tends to grow exponentially, creating new communities, which go beyond the social circles established in the physical territory. (Dantas e Rocha, 2016: 10)

Dantas and Rocha explain that “the internet as a means of communication plays a fundamental role in postmodern society, not only because of its global reach but because of its dialogical characteristics” (2016: 12). This is because, unlike what happens in traditional media, the internet enables new forms of reader participation and news dissemination. Journalists, when integrating on the internet to transmit the news, had to adapt their routines to this new reality. Currently, more and more journalism professionals work with social networks:

The applications that have leveraged the success of the Web are also the most used by journalists in their daily lives. Some of them, such as social networks and blogs, have profoundly changed the routines of news production, being today perfectly integrated with professional journalistic activity, especially in two crucial phases of the journalistic production process: the gathering of information and the distribution of news (Canavilhas, 2010: 3)

In addition to the change in the role of journalists, Canavilhas also highlights changes related to readers. According to the author, these cease to be merely readers and become gatekeepers as well, since communication on social networks is bidirectional. On the other hand, taking into account that, journalism contributes to the construction of society's perception on several themes, including politics, as Krippendorff says, “journalism has changed in the intervening years and has shown itself to be responsive to the evolving cultural climate and to shifting political and economic conditions” (2004: 55)

With this investigation, it was possible to conclude that social networks, namely Facebook, are a good network for sharing information and are responsible for a new approach to politics in cyberspace. We conclude that in this network, users can participate in the content that is disseminated, through comments and reactions, to make this communication bidirectional, as we verified, in the several of the publications studied, in which the internet users sought to give their opinions and comments on the information provided, contributing to the exercise of cyberdemocracy, proposed by Rodrigues.

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