

# TEORIA POLITICA

NUOVA SERIE

ANNALI III



Marcial Pons

MADRID | BARCELONA | BUENOS AIRES | SÃO PAULO  
2013

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## In questo numero. Nei prossimi numeri. Invito a contribuire

### In questo numero

Il presente volume di *Teoria politica* si articola in *cinque sezioni*.

La prima sezione comprende sette articoli raccolti sotto il titolo *La democrazia nella rete?* È il problema sul quale *Teoria politica* ha promosso una riflessione collettiva, lanciando nel numero scorso (vol. II, 2012) uno specifico invito a contribuire. Alcuni di questi articoli —quelli di Gloria Origgi, Massimo Durante, Giuliano Bobba, Andrea Greppi e Giovanni Ziccardi— corrispondono ai testi riveduti e corretti delle relazioni tenute al *Secondo seminario di Teoria politica*, organizzato ad Aosta nel giugno 2012 in collaborazione con l'Università della Valle d'Aosta e curato da Ermanno Vitale, nell'ambito della ricerca PRIN 2008, *La democrazia dopo la democrazia*, diretta da Michelangelo Bovero. Gli articoli di Luca Mori e di Daniel Devatman Hromada sono contributi originali che rispondono al nostro più ampio invito alla riflessione comune.

La seconda sezione comprende sette articoli sul tema *Forma di governo e sistema elettorale*. I primi sei —di Michel Troper, Massimo Luciani, Eric Millard, Sergio Dellavalle, Jacopo Rosatelli e Stefano Passigli— corrispondono ai testi riveduti e corretti delle relazioni tenute al seminario omonimo organizzato a Torino nell'ottobre 2012 da *Teoria politica* in collaborazione con la *Scuola per la buona politica di Torino*. Essi sono utilmente integrati dal contributo di Giorgio Sobrino, che offre una rassegna critica degli studi sui rapporti tra governo e parlamento in Italia dopo il 1993, anno della prima riforma elettorale in senso maggioritario.

La terza sezione, più breve, comprende due articoli sul tema *Metaetica e politica*, che si riconnettono direttamente all'ampio dibattito ospitato sul volume II, 2012 di *Teoria politica*. José Juan Moreso risponde qui alle critiche rivolte in quella sede da Pierluigi Chiassoni, Luigi Ferrajoli, Riccardo Guastini e Patricia Mindus alle sue tesi sull'oggettivismo etico; Jordi Ferrer riprende e discute criticamente gli argomenti proposti nel numero scorso da José Luis Martí sul relativismo e la giustificazione della democrazia.

La quarta sezione ospita quattro *Saggi* non riconducibili ai fuochi tematici delle sezioni precedenti. Peraltro, l'articolo di Camilla Emmenegger, Francesco Gallino e Daniele Gorgone sulla categoria laboetiana di servitù volontaria si riconnette alla problematica affrontata da più autori sul numero scorso di *Teoria politica* (II, 2012), nella sezione intitolata «Obbedienza e consenso». Fabrizio Cattaneo offre un'analisi innovativa del concetto kantiano di repubblica. L'articolo di Luigi Ferrajoli su diseguglianze e razzismo corrisponde al testo riveduto della relazione da lui presentata ad un convegno su «Razzismi senza razze», svoltosi a Brescia nell'ottobre 2012. L'articolo di Pier Paolo Portinaro è un'ampia rassegna critica degli studi sull'itinerario e gli ultimi sviluppi della scuola di Francoforte.

La quinta sezione, *Rassegne di studi*, comprende due note critiche di Amando Basurto e Man Kwon Kim, dedicate alla discussione del recente volume *Hannah Arendt and the Law*, a cura di Marco Goldoni e Christopher McCorkindale (Hart, 2012).

### Nei prossimi numeri

*Teoria politica* intende mantenere aperta e invita ad alimentare la discussione sui nuclei tematici inaugurati nei numeri scorsi. La riflessione collettiva su *metaetica e politica*, avviata nel volume II, 2012 e già ripresa una seconda volta in questo numero, merita di essere proseguita. L'attenzione alla vasta problematica dell'*obbedienza* e del *consenso* e dei loro contrari, la *disobbedienza* e il *dissenso*, anch'essa riproposta nel presente volume, non può mancare di essere riattivata, dall'osservazione di fenomeni nuovi la cui manifestazione induce anche a riformulare alcuni degli interrogativi intorno alla *democrazia nella rete* (*democracy on the net*) che hanno orientato i contributi alla sezione d'apertura di questo numero. Mi riferisco in particolare all'avvento sulla scena politica italiana del «Movimento Cinque Stelle», ma anche a soggetti politici analoghi, o in qualche misura simili, comparsi in altri contesti, come il «Partito dei pirati» in Germania. Nel caso italiano, un soggetto collettivo nato su internet, di identità e orientamento politico incerti, definito in negativo dal dissenso radicale nei confronti dei partiti tradizionali e del sistema politico nel suo complesso e dalla diffidenza estrema, se non dal rifiuto, verso le forme di partecipazione tipiche della democrazia rappresentativa — un soggetto riconducibile perciò nell'ambito dei fenomeni politici che Pierre Rosanvallon ha raccolto entro la nozione-cornice di «controdemocrazia» —, con l'ultima competizione elettorale ha valicato le frontiere delle istituzioni rappresentative, insediandosi in entrambe le camere come consistente minoranza, decisa a rivoluzionare forma e sostanza della vita parlamentare. In sintesi, forse si potrebbe dire che la controdemocrazia è entrata nella democrazia, contaminando forme dirette e indirette, negative e positive di partecipazione al processo decisionale politico. Le modalità d'azione del soggetto (relativamente) nuovo sono ancora incoative e per nulla consolidate; ma le vie sinora intraprese di ibridazione tra democrazia elettronica e parlamentare, tra rappresentanza e partecipazione diretta dei militanti sono apparse a molti tali da corroborare alcune tesi dei cosiddetti «cyberpessimisti». In particolare, la selezione attraverso internet dei candidati alle istituzioni rappresentative non sembra aver dato risultati soddisfacenti per coloro stessi che hanno sostenuto il movimento con il voto elettorale.

Al tempo stesso, *Teoria politica* invita a riconsiderare in termini più radicali e precisi il problema complementare della *democrazia «in trappola»* (*democracy in the net*). La metafora della rete-trappola suggerisce l'immagine di un potere democratico «imbrigliato» nelle sue decisioni. Ma forse si possono usare espressioni più incisive: negli ultimi tre decenni la politica democratica ha subito l'invasione ed anzi la progressiva colonizzazione da parte del potere economico, specificamente del capitalismo finanziario. Per supremo paradosso, la stessa crisi globale scatenatasi dall'interno di questo settore dell'economia capitalistica nel 2007-8,

e soprattutto i modi della sua gestione, hanno provocato un'ulteriore crescita e concentrazione del potere delle istituzioni bancarie e finanziarie, controllate da una ristretta oligarchia transnazionale. Lo strapotere del potere economico ha progressivamente piegato ai propri scopi l'esercizio del potere politico. Così, la politica è diventata —o ridiventata, ma in misura e proporzioni inaudite— ancella dell'economia. Ma non si tratta soltanto dell'esito fatale di uno squilibrio di poteri generatosi per supposte cause oggettive, riassumibili sotto l'equivoca e comoda etichetta della «globalizzazione». Quella delle classi politiche può essere facilmente riconosciuta come una forma di «servitù volontaria»: dall'inizio degli anni Ottanta del secolo scorso i centri nevralgici della politica mondiale si sono esercitati nell'opera di rafforzare i poteri economici, togliendo ogni vincolo alla circolazione dei capitali e alle attività speculative. In tal modo, scriveva Luciano Gallino su *Teoria politica* (I, 2011, p. 108), «anziché prefiggersi di regolare l'economia per adattarla alla società, la politica si [è] impegna[ta] ad adattare la società all'economia». Questo fenomeno epocale è stato promosso e legittimato dall'egemonia culturale del cosiddetto neo-liberalismo: un'ideologia (questa sì) globale, politica ed economica insieme, la cui implicazione più coerente sul piano delle forme di governo non può che essere la tecnocrazia. Ma la tecnocrazia è per sua natura incompatibile con la democrazia.

Più in generale, *Teoria politica* sollecita a riprendere la riflessione ad ampio raggio sui destini incrociati del capitalismo e della democrazia. Scriveva Norberto Bobbio già nel lontano 1988 (sul vol. IV, n. 1 della prima serie di *Teoria politica*): «sinora la democrazia politica è convissuta, o è stata costretta a convivere, con il sistema economico capitalistico. Un sistema che non conosce altra legge che quella del mercato, che è di per se stesso completamente amorale, fondato com'è sulla legge della domanda e dell'offerta, e sulla conseguente riduzione di ogni cosa a merce». Bobbio citava un'affermazione di Heinrich Böll: «Se non esiste una forza capace di opporsi al materialismo del mercato, non importa di che tipo, religioso, politico, ideologico, allora sui nostri mercati venderemo anche noi stessi, se non addirittura i nostri nipotini». E concludeva: «Bisogna pur lealmente riconoscere che sinora non si è vista sulla scena della storia altra democrazia che non sia quella coniugata con la società di mercato. Ma cominciamo a renderci conto che l'abbraccio del sistema politico democratico col sistema economico capitalistico è insieme vitale e mortale, o meglio è anche mortale oltre che vitale».

## Inviti a contribuire

### 1. *Democrazia o demagogia digitale?*

«Democrazia digitale» e/o «democrazia elettronica» sono formule ampie, cui non sembra corrispondere una nozione dai confini precisi. I fenomeni da esse indicati risultano spesso eterogenei e ambigui. Alcuni di questi sembrano anzi in contrasto con le condizioni essenziali della democrazia, in primo luogo con il principio di eguaglianza: non solo il cosiddetto *digital divide*, ma l'esiguità e la casualità della partecipazione a processi politici attraverso internet rendono (per

ora?) difficile riconoscere come «democratiche» le forme «digitali» di esercizio della cittadinanza attiva, e soprattutto la legittimità dei loro esiti. Peraltro, la diffusione dell'uso delle ICT ha con ogni evidenza inciso profondamente in senso democratico sulle dinamiche politiche in molte parti del mondo, a partire dai grandiosi movimenti di protesta irradiatisi dopo il 2011, alcuni dei quali sono stati salutati come l'inizio di una «quarta ondata» del processo globale di democratizzazione. Ma non pochi studiosi dubitano che la partecipazione politica attraverso la rete e l'uso delle ICT possa efficacemente valicare i confini, appunto, della protesta: che possa passare, per così dire, dalla «controdemocrazia» (nel senso di Rosanvallon) alla democrazia. Là dove questa via è stata intrapresa in forme originali —come in Italia dal Movimento Cinque Stelle— l'esperimento ha suscitato molte perplessità: in particolare, non sembrano evitati i rischi congiunti del populismo e del personalismo, della tendenziale chiusura settaria e del controllo autocratico.

*Teoria politica* incoraggia contributi sui seguenti temi specifici:

- le virtù e i limiti democratici della partecipazione politica attraverso la rete;
- la democrazia digitale come pretesa di democrazia «direttissima», o come forma di democrazia delegata che imporrebbe il ritorno al vincolo di mandato;
- possibilità e rischi di una selezione digitale della classe politica;
- effetti imprevisi e/o indesiderati dei tentativi di ibridazione tra democrazia digitale e parlamentare.

## 2. *Capitalismo e democrazia*

La cultura politica moderna è scaturita dal riconoscimento e dalla garanzia dei diritti fondamentali dell'individuo: diritti inalienabili, ossia, alla lettera, che non si possono comprare né vendere. Di qui, la tensione intrinseca che sussiste tra società di mercato e società democratica, fondata sui diritti politici di autodeterminazione collettiva. I diritti fondamentali sono i limiti e i vincoli di qualunque potere. Come ci ha insegnato Montesquieu, se non incontra limiti qualunque potere tende all'abuso. Nel tempo della *de-regulation*, inaugurato dai governi Thatcher e Reagan a cavallo tra gli anni Settanta e Ottanta del secolo scorso, si sono moltiplicati gli abusi del potere economico: il potere di fantomatiche forze anonime, i «mercati», gli speculatori; degli istituti di valutazione economica, le cosiddette agenzie di *rating*; di istituzioni economiche sovra-statali, il Fondo Monetario, la Banca Centrale Europea, tutti soggetti capaci di imporre direttive vincolanti ai governi. Il potere economico è diventato pervasivo, preponderante, soverchiante, tanto da dettare leggi al potere politico, ossia al potere di far leggi. O addirittura, da insediarsi al posto del potere politico. E ha legittimato se stesso presentandosi come un potere neutro, seguace delle leggi «naturali» dell'economia, che reggono il sistema capitalistico; come un potere «tecnico», fondato sulla «scienza» economica. Scienza o ideologia? Nei tempi più recenti, al «sapere esperto» dei corifei della scienza economica neo-liberale sono state opposte contestazioni e confutazioni. Ma i centri nevralgici del potere economico continuano



a dominare, sugli assetti sociali e sui processi di decisione politica, svuotando di potere la democrazia.

*Teoria politica* incoraggia contributi sui seguenti temi specifici:

- il ritorno della nozione stessa di capitalismo e di nuove teorie del capitalismo;
- il rapporto multiforme tra capitalismo e diritti fondamentali;
- le tensioni molteplici tra società di mercato e democrazia;
- la tensione tra scelte tecniche e decisioni politiche democratiche.

M. B.

# This Issue. Next Issue. Call for Papers

## This Issue

This volume of *Teoria politica* is published in *five sections*.

The first section includes seven articles collected under the title *Democracy in the Net? Teoria politica* promoted a collective reflection on it, by launching a specific call for papers in the last issue (II, 2012). Some of these articles —the contributions by Gloria Origgi, Massimo Durante, Giuliano Bobba, Andrea Greppi and Giovanni Ziccardi— are revised papers presented at the *Second Seminar of Teoria Politica*, held in Aosta in June 2012, in collaboration with the University of Valle d'Aosta and organised by Ermanno Vitale, within the PRIN 2008 research, *Democracy after Democracy*, directed by Michelangelo Bovero. The articles by Luca Mori and Daniel Devatman Hromada are original contributions responding to our broad call for a collective reflection.

The second section includes seven articles on the topic *Form of Government and Electoral Rule*. The first six —by Michel Troper, Massimo Luciani, Eric Millard, Sergio Dellavalle, Jacopo Rosatelli and Stefano Passigli— are revised texts of the speeches delivered at the seminar (Torino, October 2012) organised by *Teoria politica* in collaboration with *Scuola per la buona politica di Torino*. The contribution by Giorgio Sobrino usefully complements them, by offering a critical review of the studies on the relations between Government and Parliament in Italy after 1993, year of the first electoral reform towards a first-past-the-post system.

The shorter third section includes two articles on the topic *Meta-ethics and Politics*, directly connected to the broad debate hosted by *Teoria politica*, vol. II, 2012. José Juan Moreso hereby replies to the criticisms directed at his theories on moral objectivism by Pierluigi Chiassoni, Luigi Ferrajoli, Riccardo Guastini and Patricia Mindus; Jordi Ferrer critically resumes and discusses the theories proposed in the last issue by José Luis Martí on relativism and justification of democracy.

The fourth section includes four *Essays* not referring to the thematic foci of interest of the previous sections. Moreover, the article by Camilla Emmenegger, Francesco Gallino e Daniele Gorgone on the category of «voluntary servitude» (La Boétie) is strictly linked to the themes debated by several authors in the last issue of *Teoria politica* (II, 2012), within the section dedicated to «Obedience and Consent». Fabrizio Cattaneo offers an innovative analysis of the Kantian concept of republic. The article by Luigi Ferrajoli on inequalities and racism is the revised text of his speech delivered at the seminar «Racisms without Races», held in Brescia, October 2012. The contribution by Pier Paolo Portinaro is a wide review of the studies on the itinerary and last developments of the Frankfurt School.

The fifth section, *Review Essays*, includes two contributes by Amando Baurto and Man Kwon Kim, dedicated to debate the recent book *Hannah Arendt and the Law*, edited by Marco Goldoni and Christopher McCorkindale (Hart, 2012).

## Next Issue

*Teoria politica* intends to keep open and invite to nourish the debate on the thematic cores lunched by the last issues. The collective reflection on *meta-ethics and politics* started in volume II, 2012 and resumed in the present issue, is worth deepening. The attention to the wide topic of *obedience* and *consent* and of their contraries, *disobedience* and *dissent*, also resumed in the present issue, must be fuelled, due to the development of new phenomena implying the reformulation of some questions about the *democracy on the net*, which oriented the contributions to the opening section of this issue. I am especially referring to the onset of the «Movimento Cinque Stelle» («Five-Star Movement») within the Italian political scene, as well as to similar political movements, like the «Pirate Party» in Germany.

In the Italian case, a collective subject born on the Internet, with uncertain identity and political orientation, is characterised by the radical dissent towards traditional political parties and the whole political system as well as by the extreme mistrust, if not rejection, towards the forms of participation typical of representative democracy; therefore, a subject that might be referred to the range of political phenomena Pierre Rosanvallon gathered within the frame concept of «counter-democracy». Through the last electoral competition, it managed to cross the boundaries of representative institutions, taking office in both the Houses of Parliament as a robust minority, determined to revolutionise form and substance of parliamentary life.

In summary, we might probably maintain that counter-democracy stepped into democracy, contaminating direct and indirect, negative and positive forms of participation in the political decision-making process. The courses of action of this pretty new subject are still embryonic and not well-established; although, the undertaken paths of hybridisation between electronic and parliamentary democracy, between representation and direct participation of activists seem to confirm some theories of the so-called «cyber-pessimists». In particular, the candidate selection to the representative institutions, that took place through the Internet, does not seem to have offered satisfactory results for those who supported the movement with their vote.

At the same time, *Teoria politica* encourages to reconsider in more radical and precise terms the complementary problem of *democracy «trapped» in the net*. The metaphor of the net-trap suggests the representation of a democratic power «bridled» by its own decisions. Maybe, some sharper expressions may be used, though: during the last three decades, democratic politics has been subjected to the invasion or rather the progressive colonisation by economic power, specifically financial capitalism. As a supreme paradox, the global

crisis itself —burst from within this sector of capitalist economy in 2008—, and especially its management, caused a further growth and concentration of power of bank and finance institutions, controlled by a narrow transnational oligarchy. The excessive power of economic power has progressively bent the exercise of political power to its own scopes. Thus, politics became —or re-became, but to an inconceivable extent— maidservant of economy. It is not only the fatal outcome of a power imbalance arisen from assumed objective causes, which could be summarized through the ambiguous and convenient label «globalization». That of the political elites could easily be recognised as a form of «voluntary servitude»: since the early Eighties of the last century, the nerve centres of world politics have been practicing in reinforcing economic powers, removing any constraints to capital freedom of movement and speculative financial activities. This way, Luciano Gallino wrote in *Teoria politica* (I, 2011, p. 108), «rather than intending to regulate economy for adjusting it to society, politics engaged in adjusting society to economy». This epochal phenomenon has been fostered and legitimised by the cultural hegemony of the so-called neoliberalism: a really global ideology, both political and economic, whose most coherent implication at the level of the forms of government cannot be but technocracy. However, technocracy is, by its nature, incompatible with democracy.

More in general, *Teoria politica* claims to resume the broad reflection on the entwined destinies of capitalism and democracy. Norberto Bobbio had already written in 1988 (vol. IV, n. 1 of the first series of *Teoria politica*): «up to now, democracy has lived together, or has been forced to live together, with the capitalist economic system. A system which does not know other law but the law of market, which is completely amoral, as it is grounded on the laws of demand and supply and on the consequent reduction of everything to goods». Bobbio was quoting a sentence by Heinrich Böll: «If it does not exist a force able to oppose market materialism, no matter of which kind, religious, political, ideological, then we will also sell ourselves on our markets, if not even our grandchildren». Then he concluded: «It must be honestly admitted that, up to now, in history, no democracy has been seen but combined with market society. We must realise, though, that the embrace of the democratic political system with the capitalist economic system is deadly and vital at the same time, or rather, it is also deadly as well as vital».

## Call for papers

### 1. *Democracy or digital demagoguery?*

«Digital democracy» and/or «electronic democracy» are wide formulas, which a notion with precise boundaries does not fit. These formulas refer to phenomena which are often heterogeneous and ambiguous. Some of these seem rather in contrast with the essential conditions of democracy, particularly with the principle of equality: not only the so-called *digital divide*, but the paucity and randomness of participation to political processes through the Internet make it

difficult (for the moment?) to recognise as «democratic» the «digital» forms of exercising active citizenship, especially for the legitimacy of their outcomes. The widespread of the ICTs use, though, deeply oriented in a democratic direction the political dynamics in many parts of the world, like the great protest movements spread after 2011, some of which have been welcomed as a «fourth wave» of the global process of democratization. Nevertheless, several scholars doubt that political participation through the net and the use of ICTs could effectively cross the boundaries of protest as such: they doubt it could move from «counter-democracy» (in the sense Rosanvallon meant) to democracy. Where this path was undertaken through original forms —i.e. the Movimento Cinque Stelle in Italy— the test raised many doubts: in particular, the joint risks of populism and personalism, of sectarian rejection and autocratic control do not seem to be avoided.

*Teoria politica* welcomes papers on the following topics:

- democratic virtues and limits of political participation through the net;
- digital democracy as claim for «very direct» democracy, or as a form of delegate democracy imposing a return to imperative mandate;
- opportunities and risks of a digital selection of the political class;
- unforeseen and/or undesired effects of hybridation attempts between digital and parliamentary democracy.

## 2. *Capitalism and Democracy*

Modern political culture originated from the acknowledgement and guarantee of the fundamental rights of the individual: inalienable rights, literally meaning cannot be either purchased or sold. The tension between market society and democratic society, grounded on political rights of collective auto-determination, originates here. Fundamental rights are the limits and boundaries of any power. As Montesquieu taught, any power shall tend to abuse if it does not meet limitations. In times of *de-regulation*, inaugurated by the Thatcher and Reagan governments between the Seventies and Eighties of the last century, the abuses of economic power highly increased: the power of mysterious and anonymous forces, «markets», speculators; the power of the institutes of economic evaluation, the so-called rating agencies; the power of supranational economic institutions, the Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, all able to impose binding directives to governments. Economic power has become pervading, predominant, preponderant, until it started to dictate the laws to political power, actually to the power of making laws. Or even to replace political power. And it legitimised itself by showing up as a neutral power, devoted to the «natural» laws of economy which bear the capitalist system; as a «technical» power, anchored to the economic «science». Science or ideology? In recent times, criticisms and confutations were opposed to the «expert knowledge» of the supporters of the neoliberal economic science. Nevertheless, the nerve centres of economic power keep on dominating on the social arrangements and processes of political decision, emptying democracy of its power.

*Teoria politica* welcomes papers on the following topics:

- the return of the notion itself of capitalism and of new theories of capitalism;
- the manifold relationship between capitalism and fundamental rights;
- the multiple tensions between market society and democracy;
- the tension between technical choices and democratic political decisions.

M. B.

**LA DEMOCRAZIA NELLA RETE? \***

***DEMOCRACY IN THE NET OR ON THE NET***

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\* Pubblicazione realizzata con il contributo dell'Università della Valle d'Aosta, nell'ambito del progetto PRIN 2008 «La democrazia dopo la democrazia».

# Democracy and Trust in the Age of the Social Web

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## Abstract

*The starting point of the paper is a «puzzle of trust»: while social relations in late modern democracies are characterized by a form of disenchanting trust, that is, trust that comes out of a series of procedures of taming distrust, such as contracts, law enforcements, transparent procedures (concerning vote, attribution of rights, allocation of resources, etc.), the form of trust that seems to reign over the Social Web is the most naïve and wild form of blind trust that we have ever experienced in mature societies. Why is it so? This paper is an attempt to solve the puzzle. My idea is that much discussion about trust and the Web has revolved around a conception of trust that doesn't reflect the form of trust relationships we are involved on the net. Trust is a multifaceted notion in philosophy and social sciences that tries to capture our willingness to enter risky relationships that are potentially advantageous for both parties. Trust characterizes the fundamental uncertainty of human condition, in which we need to transfer some power of control upon our lives to others in order to survive thus giving them the power to harm us. The literature on trust in social science has tried to capture the nature of this complex and instable relation, and measure its rational bases. Yet, I don't think that the notion of relational trust says anything about our trust in information-dense environments such as the Internet and the Social Web. Trust in these environments is first of all a form of epistemic trust, that is, trust in persons or systems through which we are able to extract relevant information. In this paper, I provide a definition of epistemic trust suitable to understand the massive trust we observe in social networks and discuss the complex relation between trust and information. The Social Web is first of all an epistemic engine that allows us to extract information about what happens around us. This use of the social web explains why it is so easy to trust in this virtual environment. I conclude that a responsible use of e-environments should encourage the production and spreading of devices whose aim is to assess the credibility of the systems that produce the so-called "trusted information" and protect users from the enchanted forms of trust they tend to develop through the Web in order to get information.*

**Keywords:** Democracy. Trust. Social Web. The Internet. Information.

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## 1. Introduction

The rise of the Internet within the last 20 years and especially of the social Web in the last 10 years, has deeply transformed our social, cultural and political customs. Internet has revealed one of the most powerful means of communication and networking ever and —like the invention of writing and print— a deep revolution in the production and sharing of information.

The cyber-enthusiasts of the 1990s saw the Web as the paradigmatic «disruptive technology» one that would overturn all of our practices for accessing information and empower users to collaboratively produce, access, and distribute content in previously unimagined ways<sup>1</sup>. Over the past decade, this enthusiasm has been replaced by a more nuanced attitude. Replacing our practices for accessing reality, aggregating information and creating new forms of public spaces is not simple. Our search of impartial information is notoriously biased by a number of effects such as group polarization, information cascades, and conformity<sup>2</sup>. The world in which we live today is far from being a new land of freedom and democracy. The way in which new technologies of communication are evolving in networked social spaces is not designed by rules that govern the design of democratic decision systems<sup>3</sup>. The potentially infinite and free space of the Web is becoming a *corporate space* governed by few big companies that control access and make us navigate in a land that we do not own through an architecture that is variable, invisible and impossible to control. This has led some authors to talk about a new «Digital Feudalism» and the need of a new Enlightenment to reach a truly liberal digital democracy<sup>4</sup>.

As a result, we face today two opposite tendencies in the appraisal of the effects of the Internet and the Web on our lives. On the one hand, apologists see the Web as the primary global resource to build new forms of civic participation, by democratizing communication and dramatically decreasing costs of participation in various forms of mobilization<sup>5</sup>. On the other hands, critics and pessimists warn about the risks of authoritarian turns of the new, uncontrolled technocracy the Web is making available, and the negative effects of polarization of points of views and informational cascades that discussion through the social networks is creating<sup>6</sup>.

Also, while social networks and other communication technologies such as cell phones have played a major role in the rising of important recent political movements and revolutionary awakenings in dictatorial countries, such as the «Arab-Spring» (renamed as the *Facebook Revolution*), in mature democracies, their general effects on democratic life are more controversial. Internet is one

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<sup>1</sup> Bower and Christensen, 1995: 43-53.

<sup>2</sup> Hindman, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. on this point Elster and Landemore, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Mark Davis' (Microsoft) presentation of the EC *Onlife Manifesto Initiative*, Brussels, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013, accessible at: [https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/Onlife\\_Initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/Onlife_Initiative.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Bohman, 2004: 131-155.

<sup>6</sup> Sunstein, 2009.

among the multiple facets of globalisation, and it is far from clear today how globalisation is improving democracy. As Habermas points out<sup>7</sup>, the disappearing of (economical, cultural, political) frontiers may have pernicious effects on our idea of democracy that is still centred on the State-Nation. What global phenomena such as Internet are bringing about, according to him, is a reduction of autonomy of the single states and hence less protection for their citizens, as well as a progressive delegitimization of forms of control and accountability at the national level.

Yet, apart from the criticisms based on the global dimension of Internet, the way in which the Web is structuring itself today —mainly in privately controlled social networks— although it has enhanced political debate and participation<sup>8</sup> in some areas of the world, is such that it cannot be considered anymore as a public space whose structure and maintenance is in the hands of its users.

That is to say that the relation between IT and democracy is far from being straightforward. Fears and anxieties of uncontrolled forms of new control go together with an irresistible optimistic vision of a freer and interconnected world of global citizens.

## 2. The Central Puzzle

Among the tensions and ambivalences that characterize the debate over the role of Internet in democracy, I will concentrate on an aspect of these contradictions I am more familiar with, that is, the dimension of *trust*. Trust has been a central topic in social sciences to make sense of the Internet<sup>9</sup>. Yet, one of the most striking contradictions about our IT-mediated trust relationships has been surprisingly neglected. In this paper, I will concentrate on the following contradiction: while modern democratic societies ground their accountability in a «disenchanted» form of social trust, that is, trust that comes out of a series of procedures of «taming» distrust, such as contracts, law enforcements, transparent procedures (concerning vote, attribution of rights, allocation of resources, etc.)<sup>10</sup> the form of trust that seems to reign over the Internet and, especially, the Social Web, is the most naïve and wild form of blind trust that we have ever experienced in mature societies.

Liberal democracies have emerged as a reaction of distrust to the traditional forms of power and authority such as monarchies and the church<sup>11</sup>. As Mark Warren writes: «More democracy has meant more oversight of and less trust in authorities». Constructing a political arena in which people may confront their divergent interests and arguments means establishing a set of rules and procedures that allow a «cold» yet guaranteed form of interaction not based on «warmer»

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Habermas, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. data on Pew Internet & American Life Project at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Topics/Activities-and-Pursuits/Politics.aspx?typeFilter=5>.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. for example, Pettit, 2004: 108-121; McGeer, 2004: 91-107.

<sup>10</sup> On trust and democracy, cf. Warren, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. on this point Dunn, 1988.

social relationships of trust. Furthermore, modern democracies are «inclusive» systems, whose aim is to make more and more people to participate to collective decisions. Inclusiveness implies a transition from «custom to code», because the more people are included within the same group, the less «thick» relationships can be taken for granted<sup>12</sup>. It has been argued at length<sup>13</sup> that the form of social bond that links mature contemporary liberal democracies is not trust, but a regulated «distrust», that is, a thick bundle of procedures, codes and rules that guarantee citizens that those who govern them have to be accountable.

Yet, the disenchanted trust that defines our form of political participation doesn't seem to be the default attitude once we are on the Net. Social networking facilities have developed tremendously since 2007. Studies show that people develop online social networking even when the levels of reciprocal trust and the comprehension of privacy and security issue are low<sup>14</sup>. Most people who register on Facebook do not read the Terms of Service and, if asked, don't know whether they own or give away the information they make available on their profile pages.

It is as if masses of reasonable individuals, who should be guided in their behaviour—according to the mainstream views in social sciences—by maximisation of interest and considerations of prudence and rationality, are willing to capitulate their judgement and responsibility of choice and join privately owned social networks and companies where they share personal information without the least clue of what these companies will do with these data, follow the first results of a Google search, confident that they will be brought to the relevant piece of content, base their judgements and evaluations on rankings produced by monopolistic companies. People seem willingly to throw away their privacy, their capacity of discrimination, their rights of choice and blindly defer to methods of filtering content and manage participation whose logic is deeply out of their control.

As the cyber-militant Rebecca McKinnon has pointed out: «We cannot assume that Internet will develop in a way that is democracy-compatible»<sup>15</sup>. Sovereignty of the cyberspace is made by private companies that partition it in ways that are the less and less free and determine how information is gathered, structured and presented. The cyberworld of web apps and social networks is far from being a world of free speech and democratisation<sup>16</sup>. The domination of a privately owned social network such as Facebook today is overwhelming. Paradoxically, the only country in which the use of social network is fragmented upon a variety of different providers is China, given the censorship act that blocked the access to Facebook in mainland China in 2009 and, as a consequence, that many different social networks have spread in order to skip censorship<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> I borrow the expression «from custom to code» to Harré, 1990, ch. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Warren, 1999 but also Hardin, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Dwyer, Hiltz and Passerini, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Citation in a blog: <http://themaniblog.wordpress.com/2012/02/28/on-human-rights-on-the-internet/>.

<sup>16</sup> See on this point Anderson, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Source: <http://gking.harvard.edu/gking/files/censored.pdf>.