

Refusal of Weakening the Public Space

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Abstract: Fears about the gradual replacement of confrontation (with critical sharpness) of opinions with more tender (and sometimes milder) participation in consensus or at least the visibility of participants have been attenuated for some time, as a result of contemporary intellectuals' concerns about "cases" anchored in the issue of public space. "The finding on weakening of public space" (I. Pailliant) was dislocated by identifying and subjecting the rigors of thinking to new forms and having the gift of a true re-composition, in full agreement with the time and demands of communication in established democracies (but also in those about to form – an idea at odds with P. Gross's view that "a participatory form of media can in principle be possible in the West, although it is too early to assess the long-term role that the Internet could play on democracy and increasing civic participation").

Keywords: Intellectual, Reason, Public Opinion, Credibility, Public Space, Democracy, Public Sphere, Participation.

1. The controversial public space

The public space considered "a place of argumentation and exchanges" (Pailliant 2002, 201), in a current situation – as "perpetuated, enlarged, fragmented" and "harassed on all sides" (Miège 2002, 167; 173), gives communication the attribute of "a significant part of the constitution of collective identities and an element that comes into play through the public formulation of social problems and stakes" (Pailliant 2002, 201). At the same time, ensuring the production of knowledge, the new public space – under the tyranny of the media – accounts for a "combined activity of building a common perspective, a shared point of view, as basis for interference and action" (L. Quéré). We will also say,

following in the footsteps of J. Habermas, that the new public space, in the context of mass-media logic and their claims as major actors in the landscape of social communication interposes, exists and operates in partnership with the "communicative" reason, as it proved able to bring to the round table "the communication action, as well as the becoming of politics and the establishment of social connection" (as B. Miège summarized the approach of the author who revealed the "secret" of the structural development of the public sphere).

The recollection of the four Miège-type models of communication serves to understand the "adventure" of public space from the intersection of politics with literature (and the creation of the press-reader bond – publications hosting various opinions) to the generalization of public relations ready to close the circle of consensual stakes of the topics under debate, obtaining the acceptance of ideas and the participation of social actors – from the citizen proper for the modern era to the "figure" of the consumer specific to postmodernity, and from the individual provoked by the "madness" of thinking with his own mind (G. Liiceanu) to social groups ideologically and/or numerically representative. We find ourselves in the difficulty noted in B. Miège's critical discourse (and unresolved – most likely, knowingly), in which, on one hand, it is clear that the "territory" of the mass-media generated, hosted, maintained, increased discursive social interactions – from the press of ideas to citizen journalism – and on the other hand, one can "suspect" the argumentative dilution in favor of the spectacular and the representation with aesthetic pretensions (more or less justified), at the same time with the emergence of "partial" public spaces, content sometimes not to interact (apparently, at least). The author's rhetorical question – suggesting a public space "more united than ever" – also leaves ellipsis after "We would have something to worry about."

We believe that the evolution of communication techniques and the explosion of tools for communication action bring back the chances and conditions of participation in the "life of the town" – globalized, as it has become in the meantime –, reconfiguring the relationship of trust between the public and various media (*old or new*), confirming the idea of competition for the production and circulation of meaningful content from a public perspective, arousing analyzes and controversies salutary to social health in an information society of directness, instantness, seduction, logic of entertainment, the rule of taste above the use of "outdated" reason... We separate from the authors who still believe in the inequality of access to modern means of communication (vulnerability

constantly accentuated on the poverty-wealth axis), as we have to meditate on thorny issues such as inequality of participation (due to either ownership – management of information spread in the public space, or the refusal of new media) or the spectacular comeback of the media (compared to the newer framework of generalized public relations) in terms of expressing "differences, conflicts, and oppositions", by continuing mass communication in its "avatar" of opinion press.

The new media question the concept of "intellectual" and, at the same time, its status, its role in a new era of communication, the demands of social courts interacting (at least in the presence) with exponents of intellectuality. In our opinion, valuable judgments leading to the beginnings of "stardom" or notoriety necessary for the own career of the intellectual of the cyberspace era can elegantly let to considerations regarding the traditional social partnership between the written press and the man of letters of the past centuries (for the benefit of public opinion), the reputation of various media thanks to the discursive presence of the intellectuals consistent and representative in their fields of knowledge-competence and, last but not least, the of the legitimacy of the "digital descent into the city" of employed intellectuals, civic intellectuals, magnet-intellectuals for an uninhibited, interactive audience (R. Rieffel), critical, acutely demanding urgent solutions to socio-political slippages of all kinds... (possibly, in the belief that the digital environment is pure and neutral in relation to the "miserable outside world", a condition discussed by G. Lovink in *Cultura digitală. Reflecții critice (Digital Culture. Critical Reflections)*). We are certainly "caught" in É. Neveu's sociological fabric (2004, 111): "... the democratic ideal demands an economic and cultural information journalism accessible to all, producing reflexivity on political stakes", which we appreciate as a safety net.

2. The sense of the intellectual, between preeminence and citizenship

What is an intellectual? Who can wear the "label" of an intellectual? Since when are we talking about intellectuals? Are there criteria according to which status can be conferred or designated as an intellectual? Does an intellectual necessarily have higher education? What does an intellectual think he can and should do, and how is this category perceived by other social groups? Do intellectuals take on a mission, "play" a role, or are duties suggested or imposed on others? Are intellectuals self-critical? If they belong to a minority, why and how?

Who has the right to hold them accountable or point the finger at them? These few and many other questions "swarm" around this character – source of many discussions, from the superiority, power, courage of the intellectual to his uselessness, betrayal, weakness, absence from public space...

1898, "The Dreyfus Business", *L'Aurore litteraire, artistique, sociale*, É. Zola, *J'accuse!* and the group of those who signed the famous letter requesting reparation urgently due to a man considered unjustly a traitor made **intellectual** a word that came into use. The sense of an intellectual was known since the 18th century – that of "guiding and/or serving the people" (E. Morin), of "educator of the people" (J. L. Missika, D. Wolton), but the movement aroused by the condemnation of the Jewish captain brought as a novelty the claim of some rights asked by intellectuals: to signal social irregularities, to ally in the mechanism of expressing dissatisfaction and to be recognized the symbolic power of their titles (mainly university diplomas), but also membership in the fields of literature, art, journalism... Therefore, the temporal "milestone" Dreyfus is similar to an oath of faith, as it is not the chronological landmark that prevails, but the effect: "...it traces what we might consider as guidelines for the action of intellectuals in the public space. From now on, being an intellectual will be synonymous with defending certain values in the public debate" (Cușnir 2017, 38). According to R. Rieffel, the "conceited security" of times considered glorious for the category of intellectuals was translated into their mission of "guides or gurus who denounce any form of injustice, they usually engaged under the banner of public protest, supporting petitions, manifestos, and manifestations" (Rieffel 2008, 56).

The common claim of those who formed elites in their fields of expertise means, over time, the involvement of intellectuals in public life, from the "professor of democracy" to the mediator and critic, from the spokesperson to the commentator and the "mercenary", from the one who expresses his opinion "in areas that do not concern him" to the "counselor of the Prince", from the public intellectual performing in traditional mass-media to the civic intellectuals, active in the online environment (Cușnir 2017, 359). Almost reasonable (at least bearable) attributions, such as "self-referential thinking, as intellectuals say" or the intellectual is "someone who manifests himself through thinking rather than manual action" (Eco 2016, 178), lead to the characteristic generally recognized of the intellectual, namely not only the work with the mind, but also the application of the capacity to think in the form of criticism (Eco 2016,

178). From this perspective, is the intellectual an excessive and a meddling (In a 2010 article entitled "Shut up, stinking intellectual!", the author of *Cronicile unei societăți lichide* (*Chronicles of a Liquid Society*) highlights pejorative meanings of the term, referring to anyone who thinks, in particular, think "differently than you"; just as old and kind of derogatory are the "arrows" of Barrès, Brunetière, who defined as intellectuals "those people who, instead of dealing with poetry, science or other mysterious specializations [...], puts their noses in matters in which they are not competent..." – Eco 2016, 178-179) or rather a gift for society ("Amazement is the intellectual's own sport and luxury. Therefore, his occupational attitude consists in looking at the world with enlarged astonished eyes [...]. The astonishment [...] carries the intellectual through the world in a continuous visionary drunkenness" – Ortega y Gasset 1994, 42-43) or at least a necessary evil?

3. Elites, excellence and morality

If we can unequivocally affirm the membership of intellectuals in the elite, the question becomes natural: Do intellectuals manifest a form of preeminence recognizable to the elite – of any kind (cultural, political, economic, legal)? Then, what is the source of this superiority? A possible answer could come from Jacques Coenen-Huther who, in his *Sociologia elitelor* (*Sociologie des élites*), depicts the specific elements of the elite as a minority. Identifiable by comparison with the majority (non-elite), the first is put to the test (verified) by the **identity-alterity** binomial. The comfort of having "something" in common only with members of a small group, compared to the peers in the non-elite category, this "pleasant complicity of the small number" makes the identity to be provoked (enhanced) by forms of sociability such as **separation** (P. Bourdieu) and **exclusivism** (Coenen-Huther 2007, 36-38). The latter forces the members of the elite to an *in-group* attitude, to preserve the values, mechanisms, privileges specific to the minority in question. Exclusivity can be seen in three hypostases: distinction (which makes the prestige derive from the removal of the elite from the social category of the majority), tendency to keep for themselves the advantages conferred by membership in the minority group, and fear of losing the *habitus* of the minority in which you include yourself (Coenen-Huther 2007, 36).

Alterity involves two types of attitude, located at extremes: distance from the masses, seen as devoid of nobility ("exigency and obligations, not rights"), education, attachment to history, like "drifting

buoys" (Ortega y Gasset 1994, 45), or the fraternal departure from the masses considered beneficial and bearer of a historical mission. For the author of *Revolta maselor* (*The Revolt of the Masses*), society implies the "dynamic unity" of minorities and the masses. The first ones – individual or group – claim "special qualification" and are called "elite minorities" or "elite individual", in no case "...the pretentious one who feels superior to the others, but the one who is more demanding with self than with others...", in other words, "those who demand a lot from themselves and pile up their difficulties and duties on top of each other" (Ortega y Gasset 1994, 45). The mass is the "average man", a "psychological fact", a sum of individuals who feel good in the everyone-alike position ("like everyone else"), who "do not assign values in particular", the group of those who "do not ask for anything special from themselves [...], without any effort of self-improvement...", as the Spanish liberal sharply says. The elite/mass distinction (which for Tocqueville overlaps with the ruler-ruled distinction and for Machiavelli the dominator-dominated distinction) can be theoretically dissected only in relation to general or restricted definitions, in which elements such as excellence and performance are woven– of course, referring to the elite.

According to V. Pareto, since a century ago, the elite represented a class comprising those with "the highest indices in the industry in which they operate", which leads Coenen-Huther to call excellence as the founding criterion of the elite, excellence resulting from the comparison of performance levels (Coenen-Huther 2007, 17). Thus, we will have as many elites as fields of activity. In a narrow sense, in the class called elite it is appropriate to rank people either according to the degree of influence or according to the socio-political power they hold and exercise (V. Pareto). In terms of the two types of definitions, we can easily deduce the division of the population into two "zones" (layers): the elite (the upper layer, subdivided into "governmental and non-governmental") and the "lower layer, foreign to the elite" (Coenen-Huther 2007, 19). In this way of distinguishing, it is interesting how criteria of distinction, other than excellence, come to matter: excellence, talent, morality. Regarding the latter, Tocqueville stated that there is a need for an "exigency in public morality addressed to the ruling classes", and Coenen-Huther declared that moral authority is the instrument through which cultural elites can intervene in the field of political elites (2007, 32). In another formulation of the same author, the elite represents the combination between **specialization** and **competition**, but also the coincidence between **preeminence** and **excellence**, with one condition: based on a principle of

legitimacy. When excellence can no longer be confirmed (established) by performance, the legitimacy of preeminence (especially the hereditary one) is weakened, vulnerable (Coenen-Huther 2007, 39).

The elite/mass opposition in terms of minority/majority also outlines a complex picture in G. Gurvitch. The masses express an "us" with the sense of comprehension (but in a weak degree!), of mixture (even partially), of participation (attention, a superficial one!); at the same time, "us" reveals a high level of external pressure to the individual, "thanks" to the large group to which he belongs. Disorganization and modest interrelationship do not prevent the relationship of the person to the group as from weak to strong, from executor to paymaster... At the opposite pole, the minority implies strong relations between its members, but weak external pressure to the self. In G. Busino's terms, "vast ensembles of undifferentiated individuals, without cohesion or organization" are opposed by leaders, minorities, elites (Busino 1992, 4-5).

Sharing power and, implicitly, the degree of responsibility between people, groups, areas (P. Bourdieu), fields etc. significantly distances us from the idea of egalitarian social organization. Differences, hierarchies, holding and exercising power, control and self-control, interference in other fields and collaboration between them, functional specialization and competition, etc. contribute to the balance of society, and the elite represented by intellectuals participates in what R. Boudon calls "piloting social systems". The different fields of activity, the areas (defined by Bourdieu as structured social spaces in which power struggles take place and which influence individual behaviors) have a particularly important stake: the preservation of autonomy. Those who (and when they succeed) escape the interference of competing fields in the power market. In *Despre televiziune (On Television)*, the French sociologist shows how a depiction of the dynamic balance in contemporary society of the last four or five decades is, in fact, an imbalance. The journalistic field ("through specific forces and manipulations") has acquired a special importance, to the detriment of the scientific field, in terms of recognizing the prestige of university elites. He calls this strategy of penetrating the journalistic field in the world of higher education "Trojan horse", without having, in our opinion, the surprising and perverse character (secretly at night) of the famous war... (Bourdieu 2007, 99).

The intrusion of the excellence norms specific to the "world of television" in the strong fields through tradition is not surprising at all. Successful fulfillment of these requirements serves to strengthen the academic career if the "game of fugitives" replaces the lost (unwanted)

appreciation of the specialized elite of one field, by recognizing the elite of another field, in the presence of a wide and cultured public (Coenen-Huther 2007, 34-35). In the same context, R. Boudon speaks of the "good world of intellectuals" which is oriented towards the "second market of intellectuals". Consequence-phenomenon of the non-granting of symbolic gratifications by the university to its teaching staff, the consecration by the mass-media now compensates the "form of degradation" of the past, in the same mechanism – the presence of intellectuals from academia to media devices (Bourdieu 2007, 99). In the example of the academic path of the sociologist R. Aron, it was clear that being a journalist at *Le Figaro*, in the first instance, attracts you to disregard the scientific field (like a journalist obsessed with gaining academic prestige), following that, reversing the relationship between the two subsystems (domains, fields), being present on the television screen doubles the appreciation (of the general public and of the fellows from the Sorbonne!).

The "media arbitrage" imposed not only in the social and human sciences, but also in the "tough" sciences such as physics or biology (even in the CNRS assessments!) shows, on one hand, the insufficiency of valuing their own elites in the scientific field, on the other hand, the share of one's notoriety, dependent on the reputation among equals, but also on the dedication in the mass-media, for example, the cultural shows of B. Pivot, the articles from *Le Figaro* and other landmark publications... (Bourdieu 2007, 100). Considered by Bourdieu to be radical, the change in the balance of power between the fields in favor of journalism seems to disregard the size of the specific capital held by members of the fields of literature, sociology, philosophy etc., since "academics beat up the media, demanding a review, begging for an invitation, protesting against the forgetfulness in which they are left, which makes you, by listening to these testimonies, come to doubt the subjective autonomy of writers, artists and scholars" (Bourdieu 2007, 101). É. Neveu invokes, on a trace for P. Bourdieu and J.-Cl. Passeron, a "contraction reflex" for intellectuals who feel as a kidnapping of their preeminence and social power positions the increase in power of journalists in using mass-media notoriety as a way to legitimize the scientific field. The reaction of intellectuals acquires the features of a claim of "the monopoly on critical lucidity and the possession of symbolic antibodies against the charms of the mass-media" (Neveu 2002, 45).

A quarter of a century after the publication of *Despre televiziune (On Television)* - accompanied by an equally valuable appendix ("The Domination of Journalism") - and almost a century after the recognition

of the cultural stakes of "pedagogical-paternalistic" television interested in forming the taste of the general public, following the 1990s' "eager" to please an avid consumer after the show ("slices of life, curtain-free display of lived experiences, often extreme, able to satisfy a certain form of voyeurism and exhibitionism", as states P. Bourdieu – 2007, 78), we claim that between the two fields (scientific and journalistic) there is an uncompromising compromise – at least in the case under discussion. The need for confirmation and prestige animates both members of the university elite and the press. Sometimes, the considered general interest of the mass-media (for the good or in the name of their public) "beats" the personal interest of the scientist (his own good achieved in relation to journalists and specialized institutions). However, it is certain that the need for expertise, excellence, good communication of information determines the press people to pay court, to cultivate, to insist, to meet the intellectual elites belonging to the scientific field. As an example, we call attention to G. Lovink's opinion on the "need for experts to produce daily opinions" (2004, 109), the same author warning about the end of the intellectual as a public figure with significant impact, a kind of leader who loses ground, except his performance on social networks (Lovink 2004, 111-112).

Today, the need for confirmation of teachers, researchers, writers, artists etc. cannot be generalized mainly through the press. We have no evidence of conditioning one's notoriety and reputation if and only if he made a significant halt or accepted an assiduous collaboration with the media. Both experts and journalists can invoke pleasure, the need to be present in the media and to share specialized knowledge, opinions, and possible solutions to the affairs of the "town" etc. for his own benefit and that of the consumer of the media message. Beyond the main angle of this approach, various interpretations can be found, from the intellectual-press tandem for undeniable sums, to common ideological preferences, lifelong friends, the promise of frequent invitation to the public, counter-services in P. Bourdieu's well-known logic: to the televised debates come "on-duty" intellectuals, those who accept the moderator's questions without hesitation, those who answer exclusively to the journalist's taste, those who satisfy the public's expectations, although they are aware that they participate in "really false or false true debates", in which the host has compelling interventions: the theme, the timesharing, the "manipulation of urgency state", the qualitative inequality of the interveners, the set arrangement, the meaningless interrogations... (2007, 45-56). In the terms of the author of *Sociologia mass-media (Sociologie des medias)*, it is

about the decline suffered by "this figure of the scientist who takes a stand in the public debate" forced to leave the place to "media intellectuals", friends of journalists (Rieffel 2008, 56).

Certainly, many university teachers did not have contact with the mass-media as expert guests, co-moderators etc. and did not suffer recognition damage from their own (scientific) field peers. We rather plead for the "track": an excellent man of science, culture etc. is necessary for the press to consolidate the notoriety and reputation of the journalistic field. Experts, not a few, refuse (or very rarely accept) their presence in the mass-media for various reasons (do not serve academic recognition; there is no idea compatibility; do not "close their eyes" to moral slippage of media owners and their employees; they do not want to be associated with politically enslaved institutions and people; they do not agree with the logic of entertainment – sovereign in many newsrooms with claims of correct, serious information, in the spirit of deontology). When some genres and formats belonging to the journalistic field suit them, when the voice of the intellectual becomes a pressing necessity in an anomic society (E. Durkheim), out of consideration for a loyal audience, out of the desire to transmit beneficial content etc., intellectuals descend from the "ivory tower" of personal concerns (or considered superior to those of an average person) in the media "arena" and the meeting can fully serve the receiver of the message transmitted in the media. In this case, the presence of the intellectual in a public space "thirsty" for relevant opinions, for clear and well-argued information, for public figures generating trust no longer raises doubts and controversies.

4. The public sphere, "place" of public discourse contrary to power

In "Introduction" to *Spațiul public și comunicarea (L'espace public et l'emprise de la communication)*, B. Floris, B. Miège and I. Pailliant take up the Habermasian definition of public space ("the process in which the public, consisting of individuals who use their reason, assumes the under-control-authority public sphere and transforms it into a sphere in which criticism is exercised against the power of the state"), insisting on the public use of reason in the opposition relationship between official power and public sphere, as R. Chartier also states, in conditions ensured by a "space of intellectual practices based on the public use of the reason of individuals as private persons whose critical competence is not related in any way to their belonging to a formal body,

but to their quality of readers and spectators gathered together..."(1990, 189). Hence the question: How did the press contribute to structuring of public space (two centuries ago) and then to its restructuring into the specific forms of our time?, followed by: What is the role of intellectuals in the evolution of public space?

Among the research directions of the public space copiously dominated by the media, two attracted our attention: a) the core of public space – the democratic formation of public opinion; b) the place of communication in the transformation of practices in the social-political field (Neveu 2002, 38). After Bourdieu, the simplest would be to consider that public opinion is an illusion maintained by the poll as a political tool. It becomes a problem in the sense of D. Wolton, for whom public opinion is "the most democratic means of regularizing the choice made by the citizen" and it turns into really complicated in the vision of P. Champagne, who attributes the genesis of public opinion to a domination that derives from the "multiplication of relatively autonomous social fields" and from the "increased differentiation of the social world" (Champagne 1990, 277). At this point, the reunion with J. Habermas is natural, reminding us that in "Author's Preface to the 1990 edition" of *Sfera publică și transformarea ei structurală* (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*), the author launches a challenge to all those who scrutinize the *public sphere*, *public space*, *communicative reasoning*, *civil society*, *the communicative media* etc., in the wording: "whether and to what extent a public sphere dominated by the mass-media offers the civil society bearers the chance to compete with good prospects for the invading force of political and economic environments, so to change, to innovate, to filter in a critical way the spectrum of values, themes, motives channelled through external influence" (Habermas 2005, 43-44).

The sense of this double interrogation derives from the argument of the mentioned author, convinced that the beginning consists in clarifying the way of organizing "a discursive configuration of opinion and will in the states of democracies", so that everyone's own interest and good meet profitably. In Habermas's conception, impartiality and the rise above personal interests are "the premises of communication from any practice of argumentation" (Habermas 2005, 38). Ideally, all possible targeted ones can participate in the argumentation free of constraints, with availability for any topics and discursive interventions, with an openness to reconsideration of conclusions. Democracy – with its rule of majority – will be genuine if in the matter of shaping the opinion "it remains *permeable* to the values, themes, contributions and arguments that float

freely in the surrounding political communication". The secret of rational results would lie in the "game" between the institutional state of political will and the unorganized public sphere – without decision-making stakes, but with a role in "discovering and solving problems", knowing that discussions do not take control, but they produce a "communicative force" that acts "in the manner of the siege of public bureaucracies" (Habermas 2005, 41). With his belief in the "social-integrating force of communicative action" circumscribed to the sphere of morality, Habermas advocates a *deliberative democracy* in which the force (capacity) of social integration of solidarity ("productive force of communication") opposes money and administrative power. The argumentative basis of the debates, in the form of public negotiations, legitimizes the rational appearance of the will within a public sphere considered "the quintessence of those conditions in which a discursive configuration of the opinion and will of a public citizen can be achieved" (Habermas 2005, 36).

In the sequence "Civil society or public political sphere", J. Habermas mentions as a functioning condition of the political public sphere the inclusion of "a population *accustomed* to freedom". Only in this way will we "rediscover" civil society in a democratic "picture" full of values, motivations, communication mechanisms and the organization of a political public sphere without power. In this melting pot functions – as generator and distributor of opinions – the civil society in its updated "face": "...voluntary non-state and non-economic conglomerates that [...], starting from churches, cultural unions and academies, passing through independent media, sports and *loisir* unions, debate clubs, citizens' forums and civic initiatives, reaching professional unions, political parties, trade unions and alternative orientations" (Habermas 2005, 42).

Reacting to the destruction of totalitarian political spheres by the Eastern European totalitarian regimes as a "communicative praxis of citizens", civil society is reborn "through increasing and peaceful pressure of citizen movements", one mechanism different from that found by Habermas in the West, where voluntary associations appear and function not against the regime, but within the rule of law – a hallmark of mature democracies. Here comes the filtering role of the media in the dispute between the exponents of civil society and other fields (Habermas 2005, 43). The historical moment of the anti-communist revolutions in the countries of Eastern Europe is intricately linked to the honorable mission of the press, in its capacity as restructuring element of the interrelationship of the citizens. In the information age, especially

electronic media fluidizes social boundaries, placing us in a past of hunters and gatherers, possessors of a very weak "sense of space", lacking territorial loyalties or the attachment of "physical chains", as noted the architect of the public sphere. Without borders in the distant past and in the present, people and social mechanisms come to resemble: egalitarian tendencies regarding roles (but also rights, expectations – we would add), which cause the difficulty of maintaining distinct social spheres; consequently, each ends up being "involved in the affairs of the others" (Habermas 2005, 44). Exemplifying through the social movements of '89 from Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania, Habermas argues the harassing role of the media for the contamination of broadcasting on the continental level and beyond. Particularly, television has taken on the responsibility of portraying the masses as a social force manifested as such by virtue of ubiquity. In other words, the co-presence of outraged people- live-broadcast political action-television willing to promote the image of the social "hurricane" gives the true measure of mediation of which the media is to "blame"...

A single cloud overshadows the optimism of the growing democratic potential of the public sphere due to the accentuated specialization in the social environment and the "evaporation" of all kinds of barriers: increasing the selective constraints of contemporary mass-media towards participants in the communication game (Habermas 2005, 45). Referring to new media, we could understand a viable public space as a "constellation of communication spaces that allows the circulation of information, ideas and debates – ideally, in an unaltered way – as well as the formation of political will (e.g. public opinion)" (Dahlgren 2005, 148), a sum of different public spaces giving expression to multiple identities specific to postmodern man, to the "fragmented identities" shared between different *social worlds* (Beciu 2011, 89). P. Dahlgren appreciates the multiplication of public space due to the Internet, but has doubts about the development of civic culture in the absence of a serious impact on the decision-making sphere; the "chaotic populism" generated by the new media does not leave a significant imprint in the construction of public policies (Dahlgren 2005, 152) as it does not address the citizen, but the individual (private interest, not the common good). "Neotribalism" or "enclave consciousness" does not represent a guarantor or an exhortation to debate, deliberative and civic communication, as the author concluded twenty years ago...

However, the updating of communication practices in the virtual environment implies the recognition of *online activism* (Beciu 2011, 88),

of civic journalism, the birth of debate forums, websites, blogs etc., the actors not only being "innocent" people in terms of regarding political, economic or cultural life, but also opinion leaders, intellectuals with initiative and visibility, personalities with charisma and reputation, able to "give thrills" to the users of modern media. Among them we find some names such as the founding members of the *Group for Social Dialogue*, publicists at *Dilema*, *22*, *Scena9*, and others, making us understand that the sense of the intellectual (also in Romania) has not been diluted threateningly, that we are not irretrievably wasted from a civic perspective, because, isn't it?, "See you at the Giraffe!"

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