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New Social Movements, the Use of ICTs, and Their Social Impact

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Abstract

The following work is an analysis of new social movements and the use of new technologies from the perspective of political philosophy. It stems from the results obtained in the dissertation “New Social Movements and the Use of ICTs: Case Studies,” presented at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid as part of the Communication, Social Change and Development program. While it is true that these movements have existed for a long time, new digital technologies allow for political agendas and proposals to increase in visibility, scope and dissemination. The “know-how” of these new movements and their ability to drive social transformation are expressions of a framework made up of different strategies to those proposed by traditional groups framed by political parties. The methods employed by civic action require a natural flow of information which political parties cannot reproduce. Symbolic resources and expressions of sentiments and emotions play a crucial role in structuring a new form of language and a different way of being. The implications are important, not only in terms of mass media and politics, but also in terms of social change.

Keywords

New social movements; communication technologies; social change; technocracy.

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1. Introduction. The Crisis of Political Theory

The goal of any social theory is to provide activists with a framework for political action. For decades, the ideas of Karl Marx naturally provided the theoretical framework that inspired leftist activists around the world. However, by 1989 there was an established and firmly held belief that Marxist theory had become obsolete. Marxism had once been appealing mostly due to the richness and depth of its interpretations of history and because its conceptions made it possible to understand seemingly disconnected phenomena such as politics, economics, ideology, etc. *It developed a holistic view of events and provided remarkably complex explanations for them.* The question is *why did Marxism lose its strength?* This paper will examine several reasons for the crisis of Marxism.

Karl Marx conceived society as a ‘social building’ made up of an economic infrastructure (acting as a base) and a legal and political superstructure. However, this conception of society *neither leaves place for knowledge nor for language*, as had already been addressed by both Stalin (language) and Althusser (science, experience, and knowledge). The deficiency in this conception is important. For example, Marx defines the capitalist as he who owns the means of production and hires wage-earning laborers. Yet, nothing states that in order to be a capitalist one must “*know-how-to-do*” *capitalism* or *have the profession of ‘capitalist.’* Much like the carpenter, the capitalist is a technician; he belongs to a social group that has spent centuries developing technologies as old as human civilization. Capitalists, in the technical sense, have existed since usury was developed. In line with this, Aristotle made a distinction between two fundamental forms of value administration: 1) ‘economics,’ which referred to household management, and 2) ‘chrematistics,’ forms of making money. The ‘capitalist’ used on these conceptions, incorporating them to his own ideas.

It is also worth mentioning that all technical activities are performed with the power derived from the specific know-how related to the domain of an activity. These technical abilities are, of course, inherited; they are passed on over generations, from parent to child, and therefore have an ethnic origin. Marx failed to see that *class struggle is regulated through marriage instead of through political confrontation.* For instance, bastards —peasants who were born into power— have been raised among the ruling classes as generals, politicians and priests; from the Roman Empire, to feudal Germany and then to British capitalism. They are all connected through blood ties and belong to the same *large caste of individuals who control the know-how.*

On the other hand, there is a large group made up of *individuals who lack all know-how* and are discernible only as the “social mass.” This group originated when archaic societies split into separate endogenous ethnic groups who enslaved foreigners to carry out least qualified tasks. Slaves were forbidden to practice their own cultural values and were condemned to perform brutalizing labor. Afterwards, slaves evolved into serfs and eventually into industrial workers; today they are

‘profanes’ in a society of ‘experts’. The ‘profanes,’ of course, are also connected through blood ties. The only exceptions to this paradigm are illustrated in historical literature as stories where love triumphs over the highest social barriers; for example, the love between nobles and peasants, rich and poor, etc.

In summary, slaves struggled to conquer a place in culture, in human society, in order to reduce the cultural distance that separated them from those in power. It could be argued that class struggles have mostly been struggles to gain knowledge, since knowledge is power. In this sense, both slave and master have transformed. They have assimilated experiences that are incorporated into unconscious base of society; the heritage of feelings and emotions that are an irreversible expression of experience in modern times. This modernization ensures the parallel development of what we could call ‘civil society’; that is, the aggregate of institutions and laws that reinforce unity among men by weakening the unity of ethnic groups and other groups. However, the concept of civil society is not contemplated in Marx’s ‘social building’ metaphor, but it is an important conception because it is the reservoir of all human knowledge, the collective unconscious. As a case in point, Pythagoras came from a society that no longer exists, but his mathematics is still relevant to this day because it belongs to the heritage of humankind.

2. Methodology

This paper is an outcome of the academic work conducted by Judith Cortes Vasquez in her dissertation titled “New Social Movements and the Use of ICT: Case Studies,” which analyzed a protest organized in Colombia through a Facebook group called “One Million Voices Against FARC,” and the “*Amici di Beppe Grillo di Napoli*” movement organized in Italy through Meetup. Both groups were studied based on their historical backgrounds, and an online survey designed to analyze the members’ profiles, motivations for joining the groups, forms of online and offline participation, perceptions of social impact, and the symbolic and real values of the protests, among other things.

Primary and secondary sources were used for both social movements groups. Participants were provided with surveys that aimed to obtain information specific to each group. These surveys were distributed online and used the logic of each platform as a way of approaching the participants through the virtual world whereby they carried out their actions. Additionally, the organizing committees directly provided information through interviews and constant communication.

The Colombian case study was widely covered in important national and international media; therefore, the following secondary sources were selected: *El Tiempo*, the leading newspaper in Colombia, and *Semana*, the nation’s most influential magazine. Research papers and publications in different online media outlets were also used. Another source was *Caracol*, Colombia’s first radio station, which has an updated electronic database that facilitates different types of documents.

Population and sample

This work focused on the universe of Facebook users. The population consisted of the members of “One Million Voices Against FARC,” a group that was created on January 4, 2008. On April 26, 2008 it had 358,190 members and by May 11, 2009 it had 445,448. That same day, 441 active members agreed to answer the online survey, making them the sample of this work.

On February 20th, 2011, the group *Amici di Beppe Grillo di Napoli* had 4,419 members in the city of Naples; 210 participated in the online survey. The total number of members in this Meetup group reached 77,422, all of which were scattered across 283 cities and 11 countries around the world.

The surveys sent out to both samples of activists provided information on how these social movements organized their forms of action using online media in order to establish an offline presence. The following analysis is based on the results of this research.

3. The Rise of Technocracy

Within the framework described above, the struggle over knowledge, that is, the struggle to occupy a place in culture, is nothing other than Marx’s “class struggle.” He proposed a revolution, a forced expropriation of the social knowledge possessed by the powerful castes. Lenin later discovered something that Marx had not considered: that it isn’t possible to break down powerful castes through pure political actions. Building political consciousness is not enough. A political unconsciousness must be created instead; in other words, the archaic inheritance of social knowledge needs to be modified to strengthen civil society; but this has been delayed until oblivion.

Despite its precarious foundations, Marxism triumphed in countless political battles until 1989, when the inevitable happened: it *imploded*. Marxism collapsed like a house of cards. The Russian Revolution had relegated civil society from the beginning and a new caste, the “vanguard party,” usurped power. The party’s technocrats, who were mostly individuals from educated middle-class families, did what they knew best; they held power. The discourse was different, yet it produced the same result. The dictatorship of the proletariat required the majority of the population to make huge sacrifices, and every sacrifice was met by even greater demands. It soon became evident that communist states were quickly losing the support of their people. Furthermore, many Marxists suggested that the deficiencies revealed in the Soviet Union’s history were evidence to support the hypothesis that power had fallen into the hands of a new ruling class, *the class of the technocrats and bureaucrats*.

The surprising collapse of the Soviet Union allows for us make a more in-depth study of this hypothesis of a new ruling class. First, let us examine the signs that point to a possible new *mode of production* brought about by the ‘scientific and technical revolution’ studied in detail by John D. Bernal (1901-1971) and Radovan Richta (1924-1983). In his book, *Civilization at the Crossroads* (1972), Richta argues that the incorporation of automation into the production process substituted

industrial workers with a *new kind of experts: the economist, the engineer, and the scientist*. According to Richta and ideologists of the aborted Czech revolution, society was entering a new era which they associated with socialism. Unfortunately, in 1968 Soviet tanks crushed their theories, reducing the promise of an interesting development to rubble. We believe that Richta and his colleagues understood that *a new mode of production*, defined by the enthronement of *automated processes*, had appeared in society. Furthermore, these processes have accelerated thanks to the digitalization of society.

The new mode of production that was a result of the technical revolution and the development of artificial intelligence, cybernetics, and computers; it took place after World War II and over the years caused the complete digitalization of social life. Let us call it the *Automated Technocratic Mode of Production*. According to Richta, the new mode of production was mainly based in the United States and in capitalist countries of Western Europe; it even had a strong presence in the Soviet Union. Now, Richta's analysis would entail a *new mode of exploitation* (from a technocratic power). If this is true, we would need to work within the formal framework of historical materialism to discover the exploiting class, the exploited class, and a framework for this exploitation. We would also need to be capable of discovering new ways of generating surplus value. All of this leads to the discussion of a different form of work: volunteer work.

4. Volunteer Work

During the Soviet revolution, the economic structure was based on bartering services; namely, values were exchanged based on the immediate utility of an item. Consumers in the Soviet Union received a list of items and adjusted their consumption depending on the availability of such item; and so, the Soviet Union began a process of *the consumer dethronement* for the benefit of the technocratic plan. The mechanism behind this process was called 'planned economy.' Socialist consumers had to adapt to whatever was made available to them, all the while justifying decisions made by the technocracy. In this regard, the process developed more effectively in the capitalist world, where consumer dethronement takes the form of exploitation of the worker. In contemporary capitalist society, exploitation of labor adopts subtle forms. It is organized in such a way that a *growing part of the labor is charged to the consumer*.

An increasing amount of the tasks within automated society become *the consumer's voluntary work*, expressed by the 'Do-It-Yourself' slogan. In contemporary society, corporations are making the consumer perform most of the work. The argument is revealing; these changes are for the benefit of the consumer because "lowering costs also lowers prices." Costs are undoubtedly reduced, insofar as the capitalist is not required to bear a large portion the cost of labor. Moreover, doesn't this also increase the corporation's profits? In order to transfer labor from the producer to the consumer, *the capitalist company must automate a large part of its production and management processes*. In other words, it must undergo a technocratic restructuring.

The surplus value generated by the consumer's free work indirectly finances the technocratic caste.

However, this new caste collaborates with capitalists, demonstrating once again that ruling classes work together in moments of social transition. A contemporary corporation is said to be capitalist if its actions rely on the appropriation of the direct surplus-value of a paid worker. Furthermore, a corporation is described as technocratic if it appropriates the surplus through the consumer's direct work. Finally, a "mixed" corporation combines paid labor with voluntary work. Microsoft is an example of a technocratic company, while the Swedish furniture company, IKEA, is an example of a mixed corporation. Unlike the Soviet Union, capitalist countries provide consumers with the items they need, not through a list, but through an open market. The existence of this market conceals the power and presence of technocracy in such a way that 'consumerism' becomes a new, justified form of exploiting the worker.

5. Relationship Between Technocrats and Capitalists

The relationship between technocrats and capitalists must be clarified in order to understand the interaction between them. Every step in society's automation process transfers power to the technocratic sphere. Technocracy works from *within* capitalism; it is *colonizing* it, eroding capitalist power from the inside out. As in previous examples of social transition, technocracy develops in the shadow of the dominant class: the capitalists. In capitalist countries, technocratic colonialism takes over capitalist power; much like technocrats in the Soviet Union once replaced the power of capitalists. The difference is that, technocratic colonialism takes over gradually; it increases its power from within the capitalist corporation.

It is imperative to understand that technocracy does not work for free; it relies on the free work performed by society's 'profane' members (i.e., the consumers). For Marx, the exploitative relationship was direct and unambiguous: the slave works for the master; the worker for the capitalist; the oppressed for the oppressor; *but the technocrat works for the individual he exploits*. He gradually dismantles the power of the capitalist (the master), reducing him to a 'profane,' and taking his place as master. The capitalist exploits the expert and the expert exploits the capitalist, but in the end the expert triumphs because social power lies not in weapons or money, or any other materialized form of power; it lies in *knowing how to use* weapons and money. In a capitalist society, value is measured in terms of *knowing how to use money*, but in a technocratic society value is measured in terms of *knowing how to use information*. Since the technocratic mode of production transforms information into money, capitalist know-how is rendered obsolete.

As observed in previous historical transitions, this new social model supported itself on the existing model of the time, only to dismantle it little by little. Unlike capitalist exploitation, which sought to appropriate the workers' surplus value, technocratic exploitation seeks to appropriate the surplus value of society as a whole. It is for this reason that the social status of the technocrat cannot be reduced to the social status of the capitalist.

The expert, on the other hand, adapts to all kinds of consumer groups, making it possible for him to survive off of their surplus. According to Marxism, economic reason is originated in the processes of

exploitation of labor, while the rest of society assumes a secondary and passive role. In contrast, exploitation of labor in the technocratic mode of production takes place simultaneously on all levels and in every social group. Everyone is a consumer; therefore, exploitation takes place in families, sports clubs, labor unions, political parties, churches, hospitals, etc. In the end, all consumers are working for ‘the technocrat’.

6. The Struggle Against New Forms of Exploitation

Faced with the advance of technocracy, ‘the profane’ started to organize themselves as a response to strengthen civil society. Note that their response takes the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supporting their arguments with ‘postmodern’ ideologies such as feminism, environmentalism, animalism, pacifism, humanism, etc. NGOs capitalized the generalized distrust in political parties, in the administration of the State, in the world of finance, and in general in any member of the *establishment* who identifies with the caste of the technocrats. Profane leaders arise from conscious technocrats in the same way that the leaders of the proletariat before them came from the bourgeoisie. Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, for example, are prominent figures of the profane resistance who were dedicated to the task of dismantling technocratic society, and suffered imprisonment and persecution for their endeavors. Profane activists are the new heroes in history; they are organized in order to strengthen civil society. They work to *defetichize* technology and condemn the dehumanizing effects of automation. Confronted with the risk of technocratic colonization, the profane fight to dismantle the power of the caste of experts, because it is within the expert group’s realm that technocracy exercises its power. In the struggle against technocracy, the profane would work together with the proletariat in his fight against capitalism. The profane would warn the proletariat about the dangers of technocratic colonization, which derived from alliances between capitalists and technocrats.

7. New Social Movements

Changes produced in the economic sphere of society seem to be more evident, but political activism creates equally evident and important changes on a social level. The groups “One Million Voices Against FARC” and “*Amici di Beppe Grillo di Napoli*” are two examples of the appropriation of State-specific tasks by civil society. When governmental bodies fail to perform their duties, civil society undertakes them. This appropriation includes particular groups as well as citizen mobilization for nature and environmental protection. With regard to “One Million Voices Against FARC,” the factors motivating people to join the group are as follows:

Of all the reasons for joining, three in particular stand out: “I joined because I am committed to peace” (89.55%) reaches almost 90%, followed by, “I joined because I am committed to Colombia” (88.7%), and “I joined because it is a way of expressing my discontent with the situation” (86.61%). In the end, the three main perspectives that encouraged group engagement were peace, commitment to Colombia and discontent

with the situation. Note how the political factor is not a main reason for engaging” (Cortés, 2011: 357).

Ultimately, the search for peace, the commitment to the country and the dissatisfaction with the nation’s reality are the factors that lead to citizen participation. Their decisions not only respond to rational considerations, but also openly express factors of an emotional nature. “Emotional motivations for joining the group include the feeling of “wanting peace for Colombia” (95.75%) and “solidarity with the captured individuals and their families” (89.69%)” (Cortés, 2011, p. 357). Peace and solidarity were determining factors in member engagement.

According to Jesus Ibarra, new social movements (NSM) are notable for their capacity to organize informally, develop and use non-conventional methods and update preexisting networks to channel emerging ideas. Ibarra adds that these groups have more flexible practices than their counterparts in traditional political parties or interest groups; they show more boldness in the media and demonstrate proficiency in using information and communication technologies (ICT), allowing them to simplify communicative processes and decisions, and reduce time and distances. Moreover, new social movements share general qualities described by Hank Johnston, Enrique Laraña, and Joseph Gusfield (2001) in their book titled *The New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*. The authors identify eight parameters that describe specific features of these movements:

1. *NSMs do not have a clearly defined form of organized supporters.*

It becomes difficult to determine the profile of the individuals who participate in these groups because they often have diffused social statuses; age, gender and profession exist as heterogeneous features, making diversity and difference their common ground. It is important to note that in this study, user profiles were similar in both the Colombian and Italian groups. In reference to *Amici di Beppe Grillo di Napoli*: “69.8% of the members who completed the survey were men and 30.20% were women. These percentages are similar percentages to the ones observed in the Colombian group on Facebook” (Cortés, 2011, p. 363). Regarding the level of education of the Facebook group: “50% were students; 40% had a high school diploma; 8% had completed middle school; and 2% had completed graduate work or above” (Cortés, 2011, p. 295). Similar results were obtained in the Italian group. Clearly, individuals who have higher levels of education are the leaders, creators and promoters of this type of political activism.

2. *Their ideological characteristics clearly contrast the working-class movement and Marxist conception of ideology as the unifying and totalizing element for collective action.*

New social movements cannot be categorized in terms of left or right; liberal or conservative; socialist or capitalist. The diverse nature of their supporters, who lack interest in adopting a particular ideology, generates pluralism in ideas and values. Pluralism is what characterizes their ideological views. The true interests of NSM supporters are pragmatic issues and seeking institutional transformations that allow participation in collective decision-making processes. This

conception is can be seen in “*Amici di Beppe Grillo di Napoli*,” as described below:

In this respect, it should be pointed out that members of the group identify their actions as a political movement. This is a specific example of ‘apoliticism’ and separation from the structure of power. Most of the discourse within the group is critical of formal government institutions and produces abundant information against these structures in the country. The wide recognition of the group as a political institution is particularly important and should be taken into consideration for the group’s discourse, as it could generate identity issues among members who identify themselves, or not, as part of the country’s political structures (Cortés, 2011, p. 288).

More than following a particular ideological approach, NSM supporters seek to lead the way in equal participative opportunities. They have are committed to the intention of solving specific issues. They clearly define the issues they want to address and their actions tend to be pragmatic and precise. In many cases they criticize the ideology of progress and they fight consumerism and utilitarianism by placing ‘the social’ above ‘the economic.’

In this sense, NSMs differ from working-class movements. The ideology of NSMs has two basic features: 1) they are concerned over dangers that threaten the life such as pollution, disease, discrimination, scarcity of natural resources and extinction of species, among others. 2) They strive for a better world, for peaceful coexistence, for the respect of basic human rights, and for cultural integration. NSMs entail the development of new aspects of their supporter’s identities. It is important to point out the significant part individuals play within these social movements. Many of the NSM achievements are due to individual actions; therefore, NSMs respect and value these actions and demonstrate interest in the personal fulfillment of its participants.

NSMs are built upon social motivations of everyday life to stimulate social action; for example, sexuality, nutrition, environmental protection, smoking in public areas, forms of recreation, management of free time, among other topics. Issues of everyday life which are considered a part of the family sphere are transformed into topics of collective interest. NSM mobilizations are characterized by nonviolent civil disobedience that combines creativity and new symbols to break the mold. Likewise, the uses and forms of interaction through online media present interesting differences in terms of gender. In the Colombian case, for example:

Women express greater interest in the Facebook wall (publications) and discussion forums. They would rather participate in spaces of expression than in confrontational processes. In comparing gender preferences, *men tend to prefer more participative processes (forums), while women prefer more informative/expressive processes (publications)*. 64.3% of men are interested in discussion forums, as opposed to only 34.3% of women (Cortés, 2011, p. 361).

In fact, most of the impact of new social movements stems from their strong ability to produce symbols and from the innovative ways in which they create meaning, as opposed to the size of

magnitude of their mobilizations.

8. The Credibility Crisis of Political Parties

While new social movements are thriving, political parties are undergoing a credibility crisis which constitutes a generalized phenomenon in Western democracies. This crisis is observed because political parties are finding it increasingly difficult to associate their activities to the development of civil society. Political parties deplete themselves by transforming their activities into the mere administration of their existence. In the citizen's eyes, democracy has reduced its existence to nothing more than one set of solutions being repeated over and over again. As for political leaders, they are perceived as a caste dedicated to preserving its social status.

In opposition to the rigid and centralized bureaucracy of the parties that represent traditional masses, the organization of the NSM tends to be diffuse and decentralized. One of the main differences between traditional social movements and new social movements lies in the form of organization; NSMs are flexible, have few levels and roles, and assigned responsibilities are always of a 'profane' nature (i.e. non-professional). The NSM's tolerance of pluralism leads to a more direct and participative democracy. Unlike the traditional bureaucracy of political parties and government bodies, NSMs encourage interpersonal solidarity. They build decentralized and participative organizational structures through their widespread use of communication technologies (ICT). Some critics believe that the aforementioned characteristics will eventually weaken NSMs; they assert that since NSMs lack a strategic plan of action for the medium and long term, they will be reduced to a mere expression of discontent. These critics believe that with time, NSM agents will get dispersed; NSMs will quickly fragment and atomize, losing their relevance to important sectors of society. Similar critics state that in exceptional cases NSMs will turn into emotional support and therapy groups, without having any further impact. It is imperative to remember that these groups have the particular ability to mutate; an inherent characteristic of these social groups is that they can surface at any time to support one set of ideals, and then quickly disappear to support another. Hence, these eight characteristics constitute the purpose, structure and conditions of NSMs.

9. ICT and New Social Movements

Social movements can also be characterized in terms of their relationship with ICTs. The work carried out by Prof. Dr. Jorge Alberto Machado of the Universidad de Campinas (Brazil), and presented at the II Online Conference of the Observatory for CyberSociety, provides information to understand several characteristics of social movements that incorporate telematic networks into their collective actions. The author argues that thanks to ICTs, new social movements have the following in common:

The proliferation and ramification of social collectives. The use of ICTs as instruments that facilitate organization and communication has allowed for the proliferation of civic organizations and social collectivities which offer mutual assistance through volunteer programs, finding positive aspects in the balance of costs and benefits, in order to create alliances and cooperation programs

with other collectivities. The possibilities that ICTs offer in terms of expanding the scope of NSMs, are key aspects of this development.

Networks as horizontal and flexible. “Organizations tend to be increasingly horizontal, less hierarchical, more flexible, with multiple ties and connected to numerous micro-networks or cells” Melucci (1996, p.127). He calls them submerged networks that can be quickly and effectively activated. These forms of organization establish a model that allows networks to adapt, expand and multiply through the decentralized and integrated nature of its structure. Networks can activate and deactivate at any time; they can support one cause today and another tomorrow. Overall, strategic alliances and the constant transformation of networks significantly boost the strength of NSMs.

Coalition-building tendency. Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman are authors who define coalitions from two essential perspectives. The first defines a coalition as an “organization of individuals who represent diverse organizations, factions or constituencies who agree to work together in order to achieve a common goal.” The second definition is that a coalition is an organization of diverse interest groups that join their human and material resources to produce a change that they are unable to produce as separate and independent individuals. Coalitions make it possible to join individuals and groups with common objectives. Thus, social movements tend to act more through coalition networks that have global scopes, share common interests and rely on the communication infrastructure provided by the Internet. This tendency is an area that interests many experts, as it raises a number of questions regarding the manner in which coalitions are produced.

Dynamic and event-related existence. The dynamic nature of these groups enables them to expand or disappear, making them difficult to study. As a point in case, not even organizers of these groups can predict or know for certain the possible scope of their calls. Certain case studies are considered paradigmatic due to the profound impact they’ve had. In examining these cases, it became evident that the individuals who started the movements never suspected the effect they’d have. “These movements tend to be extremely dynamic in their emergence and their ability to attain certain goals, to cause impact and repercussion, and to mobilize around a particular political fact; similarly, they may also rapidly fall apart or disappear due to a particular situation.” (Machado, 2007) In contrast, other activities that were expected to have a large mobilization, did not meet the expected outcomes. There is no certain way to achieve the expected outcomes, which is why many of the cases that have been studied are the product of a sum of external factors that contributed to the attainment of surprising final outcomes which were not always considered during the initial planning of the event. Similarly, communication, acting as an independent space that ensures social organization, uses new technologies as binding instruments to coordinate actions to face challenges proposed by civil society. The utilitarian management and organization of mass media opens the door to multiple expressions of a symbolic and communicative character, which generate a new and different way in which citizens assume responsibilities.

Communication media fulfill new functions, some of which are described below:

Self-regulating function. Free access to online media is enabling members of society to find open spaces for their political action. These online spaces can be managed and regulated by the users. A general regulation on the use of new media does not yet exist; however, norms of control and self-regulation have been naturally established by those who have access to the Internet. By following these implicit norms, individuals who join new social movements are able to carry out coordinated actions in a respectful and timely manner.

Phatic function. The new forms of communication and social interaction have exhibited the capability for action and implementation and as a result, the new media are now effectively developing what we have called a ‘phatic function’, understood as the ability to generate tangible actions and outcomes through the use of new technologies. Communication media, seen from this perspective, are capable of transforming reality through precise and arranged actions. They have become instruments of, and for, specific actions.

Expressive function. The main purpose of new social movements is to establish new expressive forms of reality. They produce special ways of simultaneously communicating events and stirring emotions to facilitate social actions and changes. This function is important because it contributes to the stability of a community that faces menacing social pressure situations. It provides members of society with a space where they can escape and find relief through communication and expression of different points of view.

In terms of power, politicians are learning to listen to society and they capitalize its concerns in order to respond to the reality expressed and experienced by its members. Politicians, holders of truth and solutions, are becoming excellent listeners who channel the interests and concerns of their voters. They no longer need to find solutions, but they do need to learn how listen carefully.

Communication media provide the great stage of creative outpour and constitute one of the greatest symbolic capitals used by users. Re-signification, symbolic richness and expressive diversity will be inherent features of new social movements. A plethora of messages, audiences, users and audiences are observed, and each group manages to find its own voice within diverse forms of expression.

Unifying function: Communication media have their own set capacities that allow civil society to reach its objectives. For instance, they are capable of building dialogue between diverse groups, regardless of the time and distance that separates them; they unite people in spaces that transcend personal and ideological boundaries; they are able to mobilizing others and create online mobilizations that encourage supporters to also express themselves in offline spaces. Everyone has the ability to self-regulate through the media, making it possible for individuals to organize NSMs in an independent and natural manner. Finally, communication media are able to provide innovation and creativity through mainly expressive and original models that appeal to other members of civil society.

10. Conclusions

New social movements studied from a political philosophy perspective provide citizens an

alternative framework for political action. While it is true that these movements have existed for a long time, new digital technologies allow their agendas and proposals to increase in visibility, scope and dissemination. The “know-how” of these new movements and their ability to drive social transformation are expressions of a framework made up of different strategies to those proposed by traditional groups framed by political parties. Thus, many political parties attempt to copy these strategies with little results. The methods employed by civic action require a natural flow of information which political parties cannot reproduce. Symbolic resources and expressions of sentiments and emotions play a crucial role in structuring a new form of language and a different way of being. The implications are important, not only in terms of mass media and politics, but also in terms of social change. Organized civil society uses these new methods of expression and even manages to reach traditionally marginalized sectors. The “Do-It-Yourself” logic leads new social movements to seek alternatives that will solve their local-global issues. For instance, civil society empowers itself in the form of non-governmental organizations and develops new forms of social change as a response to the sense of despair caused by political parties.

To commit as ‘profanes’ in the society of knowledge is to work towards developing a new society in which the social perspective prevails above the interests of all groups (including classes). ‘Profane’ activists strengthen education, especially of others, as well as health and human rights. They practice solidarity by breaking traditional family ties to support others; they know that one is never solitary with one’s own group, but with others. Of course not all levels of solidarity are equally effective; the more foreign the recipient, the more revolutionary the act of solidarity. ‘Profane’ revolutionaries stand up against racism, against control over sexuality and marriage, and against sexist education; they stand in favor of women’s and children’s rights, of better healthcare for all, of a longer life and better life, and of a healthy environment. Western Christian democracy will be useful as long as it does not transform into yet another project of the castes in power. To be ‘profane’ is to revolutionize human relationships, not to submit them to the control of capital, of the party or of the State, because all of these centers of power are formed and maintained by the great archaic family from which all individuals were came from.

Family is love, protection, and safety, but it is also submission, surrender, and resignation. These positive and negative values are essential to human psychology, but will become less important over time. Citizens of the future will feel love and hate, but they will also gradually abandon the most brutal features of their archaic nature. Little by little, they will let go of their hatred of others for being different; they will relinquish rape, murder, torture and the exploitation of the work of others. The formula lies in developing direct and indirect, simple and complex, social awareness; communication; organization and immediate action. Technical media in digitalized societies can partly bring about change, but most of the time the avalanche of new means of exchange is overwhelming and reinforces archaic bonds. Therefore, the exchange of information must be used to benefit civil society. This society exists thanks to the first civic achievements recognized by the men and women that constitute contemporary modernity. Constructing a new society is inevitable, but many roads lead to its realization. The question is, which one will we choose? Given that the ‘profane’ are attached —much to their dismay— to an archaic origin, they will love and hate from

their own perspective. Nevertheless, *they have no other ethical obligation than the one that requires them to break away from their archaic origin.* ‘The profane’ are not liberals, anarchists, communists, or capitalists; they are *modernists*. They seek to achieve change for a superior level of civility.

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