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# THE VIRTUAL PUBLIC SPHERE: QUESTIONING THE STANDARDS OF FORMATION ACCORDING TO THE TRILOGY OF RECOGNITION BY AXEL HONNETH

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the extent to which cyber space is able to host public sphere discussions based on public deliberation of issues of public affairs, communicative equality between social subjects. The study attempted to search for the trilogy of recognition (love, solidarity, right) by Axel Honeth and search for it within the cyber platforms that It is relied upon as an incubating environment for public affairs discussions and the formation of a virtual public sphere that seeks to achieve mutual recognition between interacting subjects.

**Introduction.**

The rapid technological transformations at the level of new means of communication have created a cognitive debate about the potential of these media as liberating mechanisms and new mechanisms of democratization in creating new arrangements in society. Thanks to its characteristics based on openness and ease of access, it gives the individual/user unparalleled authority to produce, publish and share content and access various contents freely.

Those celebrating technology represented cyberspace as an enabling environment to embrace public debate, and a symbolic outlet for subjects to obtain their right to social visibility in the public sphere. They had renewed hope in the ability of this space to form a virtual public sphere to which access would be easy and equal among all social subjects without excluding any group or group. Away from all sociocultural constraints, and reviving Agora Square electronically as for those who are wary of the outputs of technology, they see that the Internet, with its various platforms, will suffer what happened to traditional media. After being fascinated by it, doubt will come about its capabilities, and it will adapt itself to the constraints imposed by social structures, and will be subject to the dictates of the market and politics.

Between this optimism and apprehension stands the problem of our study to examine the intersections of the public sphere with cyberspace. Does cyberspace contribute to the formation of a virtual public sphere? A set of questions emerged from this problem, which we summarize as follows:

- What's the concept of public domain?

- What is the concept of the virtual public sphere, what are its characteristics, and the criteria for its formation according to the Hunteian recognition paradigm?

- What are the obstacles to forming a virtual public sphere open to all social entities to discuss public affairs issues via cyber platforms?

- Conceptual identification:

**In the concept of the public sphere:**

Habermas defines the public sphere as "a world of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed, entry into which is guaranteed for all citizens, where part of the public sphere arises in every conversation in which certain individuals come together to form a public body, and do not act like businessmen." And professionals who deal with private affairs, or as members of a constitutional system subject to legal restrictions...But citizens act as a public body, discussing without restrictions matters of public interest with the possibility of publishing them.

Charles Tyler defines it as: The public sphere is a shared space, in which members of society meet through a number of media in order to discuss issues of common interest, and through that to form common thinking on these issues.

**Concept of virtual public domain:**

Dahlgren (2005) defines the virtual public sphere as: "an interactive process that takes place between citizens through discursive spheres through the use of new media. He pointed out that there are two types of interaction: the first: it takes place through citizens' interaction with new media through the communicative process, and the second: It takes place through citizens interacting with each other, which can include any type of conversation between two people up to large meetings. He explained that the virtual public sphere is a vast field.

Researcher Poor describes the virtual public sphere as: "an intermediary for a new discursive space that includes excluded and marginalized individuals who present open speeches and present political issues that dominate the agenda of discussion and dialogue, so that ideas are judged according to their merit and not the status of the person speaking.".

First: The general field: characteristics and conditions of formation from the Habermasian-Honthean perspective

The public sphere is shaped from the perspective of Jürgen Habermas by providing arenas and forums for discussion of political and public issues to all individuals, which works to reorganize the opinions presented on the issues, crystallize them, and nominate them according to their merit, and according to the general interest they receive from the participants.

The success of the public sphere, as defined by Habermas, also depends on several factors, including:

- The extent of reach, spread, and degree of autonomy: Citizens must get rid of control, domination, and coercion, and reject hierarchy. Every individual participates in the discussion with others on an equal footing. They all realize the clarity and effectiveness of the role of the law, and share ideas and confidence in media content within an appropriate societal context.

Researcher Stéphanie Wojcik believes that public circulation, according to Habermas, is based on four necessary foundations to embody the public sphere, enable it to operate within various disparate social systems, and ensure its continuity and effectiveness, which are:

- Total equality between traders without regard to social standing.
- Relying on a rational discourse based on the exchange of logical arguments
- Teleology of reaching consensus and consensus.

Through these foundations, we conclude that Habermas makes dialogue the accurate standard that measures the validity of opinions and positions and examines the extent of their sincerity and validity with the extent of their acceptance by the interlocutors within the public sphere, in the context of differences and differences in opinions and diversity and tolerance, which is based on common similarity based on a deliberative linguistic field that takes into account It contains the rules of reasonableness and honesty and is based on argumentative discussion away from oppression and tyranny Marginalization and contempt for people participating or likely to enter the public sphere.

The concept of recognition as a criterion to upgrade the deliberations of the public sphere and transcend social conflicts:

The public sphere consists of the sum of entities that engage in public interaction and deliberation on issues of public affairs, where each entity seeks to interact and be open to the rest of the entities participating in the discussion and to reach rapprochement, viewpoints, and consensus on the issues under discussion. However, reaching this consensus and consensus is not automatic, but rather there must be mutual recognition

between these entities to avoid the social conflicts present in every social system, which often lead to changes within social systems.

Here, the German philosopher Axel Honneth proposes recognition as a new paradigm of social conflict and as an addition to the Hebermanian view of the public sphere based on interactive sociological communication, which aims to achieve consensus on issues of public affairs and produce public opinion on various public concerns. Mutual recognition, in Honneth's view, is sufficient to put an end to social conflicts based on control, domination and injustice, thanks to which individuals can realize themselves and their identity within interdependent relationships. Whenever inter-personal recognition is achieved, an open and public space is formed that is not subject to restriction or coercion.

**Honneth identifies three standard models of recognition:**
• **Love**: It is defined as the set of primary erotic and family relationships in addition to the friendship relationships that exist between people.
• **Right**: It means the legal recognition that guarantees individuals their autonomy (individual rights).
• **Solidarity:** The third form of recognition that allows individuals to realize themselves through mutual recognition, and this standard is the basis of self-esteem.

Striving to embody the right to recognition recognizes the social existence of individuals within their multiplicity and diversity and acceptance of their differences as a form of struggle against exclusion from the public sphere, and consolidating the art of coexistence

Second: Standard conditions for the formation of the virtual public sphere:

With the emergence of the media, the public sphere began to expand significantly, and with the emergence of online platforms, it became more comprehensive, complex, and interaction-oriented. Here, Habermas sadly realizes that the social and cultural challenges of the contemporary public sphere are enormous. The diversity of interests, worldviews, and forms of cultural life makes convergence in the public sphere turbulent. How can all these different voices dissolve into a reasonable discourse capable of legislating and even justifying policy?

The complexity of the public sphere has emerged strongly in terms of fields, methods, genres, and topics, and the most important changes have emerged since the 1990s with the invention of the World Wide Web, smartphones, and social media. The real innovation that came with the Internet from a democratic perspective eliminated the social division between speakers and listeners in the public sphere and made everyone potential participants in many public interactions and discussions, without eliminating the possibility of communicating in an expanded space

Davis points out that many individuals have transformed themselves into narrators, reporters, editors, and broadcasters through blogs, YouTube, and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.

From Benkler's point of view, the network allowed all citizens to change their relationship with the public sphere, as they no longer needed to be consumers and passive spectators, but rather it became possible for them to become creators and essential individuals. He argued that the transition from the public sphere organized by traditional media to a distributed communication structure with multiple links Directions between all nodes in the information architecture have removed barriers to communication It fundamentally changed the possibilities for participation in the public sphere.

Zizi Papacharissi describes the emergence of "virtual space 2.0," in which citizen consumers participate and express their "opposition with a public agenda[...] By expressing a political opinion on blogs, viewing content, posting it on YouTube or posting a comment on the internet a discussion group "(Papacharissi 2009, 244).

According to researcher Eric George, Internet space has reshaped the concept of space, time, and physical presence, carrying the promises and possibilities of achieving the public sphere in the Hebermanian concept on the line. Participation in online discussions does not require the physical presence and targeted communication of the individual. It is sufficient for this individual to access one of the cyberspace platforms, such as social networking sites or digital blogs, in which participation is easy and free, to express his opinion freely and without restrictions or any sociocultural restrictions and to enter into In virtual, deliberative discussions with other people on the line. Rasmussen argues that the Internet and personal media provide a more differentiated public space, both in terms of topics and styles, as well as in terms of the number and diversity of participants, as the current public sphere is more oriented towards specialization, due to the diversity of communication media, and the more ethnically and culturally diverse society in general.

**Researcher Lincoln Dahlberg has established six standard conditions for the formation of the virtual public sphere, based on Habermas's communicative rationality:**

**1. Autonomy from the state and economic power:** The debate presented in the public sphere must express the interests and concerns of citizens, far from what the state presents.

**2. Exchanging and criticizing** of critical moral-practical value claims: Engaging in mutual criticism of normative positions that are presented according to rational foundations, that is, they are open to criticism rather than dogmatic assertion.

**3. Reflexivity: Reflexivity:**

Participants should critically examine their cultural values, assumptions and interests, from the broader social context. Here we point out the difficulty of discovering this criterion in cyberspace due to the nature of interactions, which are very different from reactions in reality.

**4. Ideal role-taking:**

Participants should try to understand the argument from the other's perspective (each participant puts himself in the other's shoes), and this requires the interlocutors' commitment and listening to each other to ensure that discussions continue among themselves. Online discussions include some clear indicators of reckless behavior: ideological fanaticism, offensive posts, and spam or profuse posts. Which controls space and attention. We can also explore aspects of online interactions that contribute positively to exemplary role-playing and indicate radical respect for others, higher levels of empathy and respectful listening, and giving time and effort to seriously engage in reasoned dialogue.

**5. Sincerity/Sincerity:**

Each participant must make an honest effort to make all information known, including their true intentions, interests, needs and desires. Chambers, drawing on Gutmann and Thompson, points out that three "indicators that a speaker is acting honestly and sincerely are: consistency in speech, consistency in speech and action, and harmony.". Whereas, consistency in speech occurs when someone defends their position similarly in different situations or with different interlocutors, and "consistency in speech and action means that speakers should act in ways consistent with their stated beliefs".

**6. Discursive inclusion and equality**:

The discussion is open to all those affected and concerned by the matters under consideration, and each participant has an equal opportunity to make and question any claim and to express positions, wishes and needs. In virtual (online) interactions, restrictions in network access, time, or skills can, for example, be direct indicators of both exclusion from trading and unequal opportunities to communicate.

These six requirements provide an analytical model from which to evaluate the claim that the Internet enhances and expands the public sphere of rational critical deliberation.

The virtual public sphere takes many forms due to the multiplicity of spaces that make it up, including:

- The para-political domain: the para-political domain:

Focusing on the backgrounds of any topic or issue while allowing the expression of common interests, social relationships, and different identities, this civil society electronic field consists of various forms of personal publishing: personal websites, blogs, electronic broadcasting, and chat rooms.

In this area, the political aspects are not apparent, but remain latent in the activities of individuals until a conflict of interests and concerns occurs, as discussions tend to define issues and use the pronoun "they" instead of "we," and here the political aspect reveals itself.

- The journalism domain:

This field includes all opinion, editorial, and commentary materials and includes: large media institutions that have turned to the Internet to expand their reach, such as widespread television networks, well-established newspapers, in addition to electronic institutions that provide news services, most of which are not their own coverage, such as: Yahoo news, alternative media organizations such as Indymedia, in addition to blogs interested in public affairs, and other applications concerned with opinion and comments.

- The Traditional Advocacy Domain:

It includes political communication processes practiced by societal institutions and groups aimed at promoting political values in order to contribute to shaping public opinion and influencing decision makers.

Moreover, this space pushes certain agendas, it is imbued with power. The public sphere in its most direct form is the space or environment that facilitates communicative actions between citizens. In the original model of the public sphere, Habermas distinguishes between the public sphere in the world of letters (later conceived as the cultural public sphere) and the public political sphere, emphasizing the role of the former in serving as a non-political place for citizens to discuss and deliberate on matters of common interest. In these

places, ideally, the social, cultural and economic situation - where everyone can participate - would be ignored. Public participation is central to this ideal circulation, and the "environments" that Habermas favored in the original scheme were British cafés, French salons, German table societies, and later newspapers, magazines, and public gatherings where cultural, social, and political discussions took place. It is difficult to encounter the standard conditions for the formation of public circulation within the cyber space. The chaos that characterizes this space makes it impossible to reach consensus and consensus in opinion, which is considered the main goal of the public sphere. Researcher Abdel Wahab Boukhnoufa attributes the multiplicity of contradictory viewpoints in cyberspace and the lack of crystallization of a common position to the nature of the identities of Internet users, which are characterized by fluidity and mobility. The individual is only active with more than one identity in this space, and tends to join groups that agree with his opinion, orientations, and ideology, and refrains from entering. In any discussion that conflicts with his convictions and trends. Users also consume information and news in isolation, outside the context of social media, which limits common understanding of this news, which represents a condition for discussion.

Regarding the criterion of equal access to the public sphere, not all individuals have equal access to Internet platforms, as access conditions are governed by the digital divide, which represents a new form of hierarchy, marginalization, and exclusion practiced by technology

As for the Internet's realization of the values of mutual recognition that Honth spoke about, which aims to develop a solution to social conflicts and achieve mutual recognition between subjects within the public sphere, researcher Nasr al-Din Layadi believes that social networking sites, as one of the cyberspace platforms, have made it possible to embody the condition of solidarity with ease. The first normative condition was met. As for the condition of the right with a legal level, which guarantees the individual a sense of freedom and autonomy by realizing his rights on three basic levels: civil rights, political rights that allow the individual to participate in the process of forming the general will, and social rights that guarantee the fair distribution of property, it remains a subject. For conflict and negotiation in the virtual sphere as well as in the physical sphere.

### Conclusions

In the end, we conclude that the public sphere is not just a spatial or symbolic space that embraces individuals' interactions and discussions about public affairs, but rather it is an integrated system that includes various social, cultural and political practices, and is framed by cultural and rhetorical mechanisms. It can only be embodied in an environment that provides equality, individual freedom, and mutual recognition that ensures the production of a rational, argumentative discourse between various social entities to reach agreement and consensus on the public interest.

The cyber space, despite its openness and ease of access, achieved equality and individual freedom for those involved in virtual discussions across various cyber platforms, which carried with it an unparalleled abundance of communication and a mosaic of disparate and similar discourses for different entities. However, it is not always an enabling environment for the formation of a virtual public sphere based on the characteristic of sharing and sharing according to a rational, argumentative discourse and mutual recognition between social subjects according to the Habermasian proposal and the foundations of Hunteian recognition.

Also, this space does not jump on the constraints imposed by the market and political environment, as it is also subject to the control of companies and institutions according to commercial logic, and limits the visibility of speeches or ideas of social entities that plead for their cultural and civilizational being in what is known as the supremacy of the power of algorithms that grant social and virtual visibility. For social systems at the expense of others.

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