

**KNOWLEDGE SHARING, A NEW BREATH IN A PRODUCTIVE CYCLE
CONTENT CREATION AND MOBILITY IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY BY VALENTIN
VANGHELESCU - A REVIEW**

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The study “Content creation and mobility in the network society. Convergence. Collision. Transformation” is the author's doctoral thesis developed within the Doctoral School of Sociology, at the University of Bucharest. The doctoral research was carried out in a period characterized by ambivalent relationships between social paradigms; the very theory of networks has been confronted with successive re-thematizations, as a result of the technological leap from web 2.0 to web 3.0 - the semantic web -, on the background of concerns related to rethinking the sustainability in contexts marked by the interconnection of risk – the competition for Internet control, the non-transparent use of personal data by IT giants, the deepening crisis of democracy by increasing misinformation, manipulation of information and emotions, the structural effects of epistemic inequities, etc. - and the growing expectations from institutions and the quality of governance during crises that have tested global cooperation capabilities.

The approach of sustainability through interconnected multiple circularities - politics, economics, ecology, technology, culture, education - has imprinted a trend of progressive abstraction of epistemology, but also the emphasis on connecting epistemology to ethics, to differentiate between necessity and possibility (modal epistemology), or to identify and substantiate collective aspects of knowledge production - for example, collaborative science, spaces for innovation based on advanced knowledge sharing, the role of communities of practice - researchers, engineers, planners, developers, communicators, so on.

According to the sociology of networks studies, the Internet is a technical system that develops social assignments very close to the roles and identifications of real structures, functionally and systemically oriented, which preceded and coexist with the Internet, and to which the Internet is a global context of communication.

According to Dee Pratt², it difficult to analyse it because “the elements of the structure do not appear to be satisfactorily separated from the contextual elements”. The methodological solution suggested by this researcher is to develop systemic models that do not limit themselves to addressing applications – i.e., technologies, devices, software, and intelligent algorithms - but to include theories of social structure, to generate means, respectively ways to investigate and describe open-ended processes as if one or more players were creating the communication process model for other players and users.

Applications, the setting, and artificial intelligence (AI) entities are approached in an integrated way based on complex reasoning models, defining techno-social systems. The latter, although optimized through uses and communicative acts - micro-processes in which social structure elements are blurred by the abundance and insecurity of information in the digital

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² Dee Pratt, *The Internet as Social System: Applying Margaret Archer's Theory of Morphogenesis to Hypermedia Communication*, Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics and Information, Volume 12, Number 1, 2014.

environment - are largely shaped by the competition between high-tech giants, the development of artificial intelligence and the quality of design. AI networks are a technology that supports industry and marketing by accelerating innovative processes as advanced knowledge applications and, at the same time, take over and develop social assembly models mainly through the open game strategy doubled by the operating rules of the setting.

The orientation towards the efficiency models of institutional communication - which include norms, values, ethics, expectations of social and spatial justice, etc. - led the author, a teacher in the Communication Sciences program at the “Ovidius” University of Constanța, to a case study focused on the development of a collaborative platform and a network of users (agency), based on the distribution of the controlled knowledge of civic stakes (structure); during the observation and analysis stages, this allowed the registration of mobility and the transformation of cultural and social capital in communication, organization and civic action capabilities – the Edgeryders platform, “Spot the Future Bucharest” group.

In the research on the collaborative culture in the digital context, the author faced the difficulty of distinguishing marks of differentiation through cognitive elements that can be attributed either to institutional communication or to civic projects, in content creation, a(n) (informal) subjective and inter-subjective manifestation largely modelled on the categories of digital content, in this case, the User Generated Content (UGC).

On the other hand, the study was able to identify through case analysis a platform whose design reflects the stakes of forming networks of citizens - stakeholders – i.e., agents able to understand and contribute to the reform of institutions, to join political and civic projects. The platform is a tool for the transfer, organization, and application of social knowledge and for the formation of skills and participatory behaviours in the “new public sphere” of networks theorized by Manuel Castells³.

Defining a theoretical strategy that is sufficiently comprehensive (open) in order to develop a systemic model and to take into account the link between a reality projected by a structure - organization or institution, network of institutional actors, non-governmental actors, and / or companies of public interest - and the context shaped by the collaborative culture as a type of behaviour valued in the digital ecosystem, involved defining ways for it to be described by “the set of theoretical ideas and hypotheses regarding the relationships between institutional characteristics and political, civic action, performance and change”. At the same time, this also implied the maintenance of a critical margin of reflection on the institutions and digital democratic experimentalism, and thereby opportunities and solutions to challenges, risks, emerging processes and the escalation of the crisis of democracy in the context of the 4th industrial revolution according to the Global Risk Report from 2017, 2018, 2019.

March and Olsen⁴ argue that most political systems can be interpreted as operating through a “combination of organizing principles” that should leave recognizable traces in the network of interactions and messages, as paths of the democratic process. The three perspectives for approaching functional democracies theorized by them are: institutional (1), rational actors (2) and

³ Manuel Castells, *The New Public Sphere, Global Civil Society, Communication Network and Global Governance*, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Volume: 616 issue: 1, page(s): 78-93

⁴ James March, Johann Olsen, (2005:1998), *The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Order*, Published online by Cambridge University Press, 04 April 2005.

cultural community (3). These perspectives are not exclusive, but rather delimit intervals in which developers - social entrepreneurs, researchers, networks of institutional partners, networks of non-governmental organisations, public interest companies - act according to legitimate communication protocols with the public, opt for one or the other perspective in their strategies, co-creating science and technology (applications) with the society. Thus, although the culture and collaborative devices favoured by Internet micro-politics are globally attributed to the volatility of opinion flows and to the difficulty of adjustments based on the shared meaning identified by Habermas⁵ as a destabilizing factor for the public rationality system (opinion - speech / deliberation - legislation), precisely the management of the knowledge gap (advanced knowledge / common sense knowledge) and epistemic inequities as structural factors require redefining the structure in order to respond effectively to technological acceleration, challenges and uncertainty. Taken together, content creation and mobility, in this study, generate an open and cyber formative circularity. They shape the understanding and train the actors in the knowledge society and knowledge economy, generating only a “new breath in a productive cycle”⁶. This approach allows the construction of a connection between the “mutual sharing of meanings” in the theory of communicative action and the “sharing of knowledge”, or tacit knowledge⁷, which, intuitively, seems to exclude the structure (explicit, clear, systematic, falsifiable knowledge); however, this coexists in another dimension with the new type of space⁸.

In the research approach, in addition to the theoretical “antennas”, it was also necessary to dissociate, to release principles, schemes and operators from digital uses and assemblages, with the purpose of integrating them into structures of public rationality and introducing a design observation plan. The design is a product of advanced knowledge, both technical and social, the latter being concentrated on the principle according to which “knowledge is a learning experience”. Thus, the author assigned to the concepts a role of reagents in the various phases of the exploratory approach, in order to differentiate this architecture (program - platform - group / network) from other platforms, media content or hybrid articulations of digital content of bloggers and vloggers.

Even theoretically, perspectives are not always easy to differentiate. March and Olsen warn against the risk according to which the adherents of any of the three paradigms - institutional, rational actor, cultural community - may end up reducing the discussion on the delineation, in the case of this study, of a digital object, having in addition to the technological layer, a cultural layer, as well as reflections, traces, bookmarks of the social structure. They say that there is always the temptation to reduce the discussion to only one of the terms of only one paradigm, as a “special case” of the preferred alternative. Pragmatically, however, the three perspectives are different. They focus distinctively on different aspects of political and public life, on various explanatory

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, (1996:1992), *Between Facts and Norms Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, MIT Press.

⁶ Ikujiro Nonaka, Hirotaka Takeuchi, 1995, *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*, Oxford University Press.

⁷ William F.Hanks, Sachiko Ide, Yasuhiro Katagiri, Scott Saft, Yoko Fujii, Kishiko Ueno, 2019, *Communicative interaction in terms of ba theory: Towards an innovative approach to language practice*, Journal of Pragmatics, Volume 145, May 2019, Pages 63-71

⁸ Derek Thurber, *Designing Learning Experiences for the Future of Learning in the Digital Age: A Proposed Framework*, Current Issues in Education, 22(1), January, 2021.

factors and on different strategies for improving social and political systems. Hence, a responsibility for the researcher to correctly identify the disappearance point in which the inter-subjective aspects of the digital ontology, i.e., those of the setting (architecture) and those of the social structure, can fade or even cancel each other out. This is a situation mentioned by Félix Guattari in his posthumous text “Lignes de Fuites Pour un autre monde de possible”⁹. Hence the need to follow the evolution of the various lines that make up the multiple conceptual networks, to create charts, to capture intersections and escape lines.

The case study can be broadly included in the category of grounded theory, avoiding the contradiction in favour of the horizon line and the ontological re-thematization of the digital object by the analytical dissociation and reassembly of its layers. In this regard, the author did not limit himself to an analysis of conversational interactions, or to a network analysis, but viewed them as layers of the same complex and, above all, dynamic, an interactive object, which can accommodate the emergence of a change in the level of understanding and the communicative action around a reality-project. This stake led him to analyse the set of objectives, ideas, and methods of the project, presented in the manual of the platform designed as a tool of public pedagogy, as well as to analyse the feedback. Moreover, it required an extension of the analysis horizon in order to include the design of the application as an efficiency testing step (according to the same manual), so that collaborative interactions can be considered, to a certain extent, analogous to specific operations of testing a prototype.

On the other hand, there was a need for a sufficiently broad and relevant theoretical approach around the core of reflection and conceptualization of the agent-structure relationship, in the context of accelerated changes, challenges and impacts of technology on the structure, assuming that agent rationality depends largely on knowledge, and knowledge “if it is performative, it is spatial”¹⁰. At the same time, the learning experience cannot be reduced to the calculation of communication facilities or device performance, a basic criterion in considering the Internet as a type of service for millions of users. Thus, the network society is approached from the perspective of reflexive sociology and of the concern for the sustainability of institutions, precisely in order to strengthen the stabilizing factors for the social fabric - public education projects, alternatives, transparency of power and influence structures, cognitive investment in citizens and so on.

The methodological design reflects a research strategy that structures tools for approaching a collaborative platform, both as a digital object - in terms of the promises displayed by the setting -, and by theoretically justified analytical filtering, in relation to sets of concepts; some of them precede the network, either in the form of network vs. structure, either in terms of flexible uses of concepts such as “system”, “agency”, etc.

Although the creation of a systemic model cannot be identified as the explicit stake of this research, it was gradually built by addressing the ontology of the Internet in relation to structural stakes; this is a tense relationship marked by competition and confrontation, but also a complementary one, thus framing more precisely the rational institutions in relation to the mimetic, or symbolic ones, or those of non-human entities, multiplying and / or aggregating messages in

⁹ Félix Guattari, *Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles*, Editions de l' Aube, Paris, 2011.

¹⁰ Shann Thurnbull (2003). *The Science of Corporate Governance*, Wyley Online Library, p.137

the space of the global communication network, defined by design. In this sense, the theory he chose, and which raises the designers' interest is the realist-critical theory of the British philosopher Roy Bhaskar¹¹. This theory allows nuances of the concept of reality - real, current, and empirical, with increased relevance for describing and explaining the processes of knowledge. According to this theory, the realm of reality includes mechanisms (respectively, causes) that often manifest themselves simultaneously with events and experiences or independently, through latencies, etc. This category of the real is influenced by the knowledge of structural complexity; the present includes events and experiences; while the empirical is the "tip of the iceberg", encompassing "residual" traces - ideas, thoughts, memories, cognitive acquisitions - generated by events.

According to Pratt, the design of techno-societal systems must acknowledge that the Internet has the nature a social system. In this way, there emerges the opportunity to frame within the reality some description ways and complex logical reasoning, oriented towards solving problems. On the other hand, in observing the differences between a systemic model and the architecture of a platform as a networking space, it is necessary to reconsider systems with open results (unpredictable, risky, or even failure), like "the system created by an agent (author) to reshape a communication system".

This perspective allowed the acknowledgement of an agency in a collaborative culture (associated with autopoiesis, therefore opposite to the structure), the latter being a loop that can metamorphose quickly, unlike the slow transformations of the structure, characterized by "historical inertia". This study is an important step for understanding the complementarities in / between the network, collaborative culture, and social structure (institutions, organizations), advocating a re-thematization of the network ontology through the construction of systemic models and the recovery of the social complexity in the digital culture.

¹¹ Roy Bhaskar (2008:1977). *A Realist Theory of Science*, Routledge.