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NON-LINEAR COMMUNICATION: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICS

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Introduction:

Social media contributed to change our vision of the modern world, a world that has been evolving frantically and has seen many political ideologies and structures vanish.

The process of state modernization, the eradication of obsolete centralized canons and the abrogation of power structures such as the feudal state and the absolutist state launched the basis for the liberal and democratic state that places diversity and anti-marginalization as primary goals to look up to. Furthermore, these computer-mediated technologies facilitate the creation and divulgation of informations through virtual communities and networks of different nature (social, political, etc.). Broadly speaking, these web-based common platforms embrace the idea of circular communication, in fact, news, informations and user-generated contents are at everyones disposal and usually the origin of these data is unknown or uncertified. Technically, the circular communication or non linear communication adds a further step to the typical linear communication function: issuer, message and recipient; this step is known as 'feedback' and takes into account the recipient's response. The model thus passes from one linear logic to a circular logic, which allows the transmitter to understand if the message has been correctly received, and make reinforcements if necessary. The issuer becomes at the same time recipient and issuer, the metaphor is that of a 'tennis match'. A prominent student of the university of Bari "Aldo Moro", in his thesis, talks about the evolution of the consumer in the technological era and his new relationship with brands. The thesis by the student of the course 'Marketing and Communication', Adriano Lionetti, analyzes the concept of non linear or simply non conventional communication in the field of marketing. He sustains that the multiplication of marketing 'panacee' has led consumers to turn into a "anti-marketing" behaviour, precisely because marketing technicians increasingly invade advertising space with their messages, in an era where consumers, thanks to the opportunities offered by the web, feel more and more masters of their lives. In a period in which consumers are smart, technologically advanced and with little time

available, the resistance to marketing is not a desire to stop buying, but a desire to interweave with brands and the need for them to show ever greater attention to the consumer. These "anti-marketers" are not against the free market, but reject marketing and intrusive advertising because, thanks to the web, they have become increasingly participative: they create content, give advice, dialogue, and do not want to be considered simple receptors to whom transmit a message, but pretend to be questioned and listened. This interpretation is of course the result of the progressive and competitive society that we live in now. In fact also the theory explained by this thesis supervised by the professor Arianna Di Vittorio is based on an approximately newborn field of studies, such as Marketing itself. This reasoning is the product of the consciousness that today, theoretically, information is, or at least should be, symmetric and available to everyone and there is no individual or group discrimination, everyone possesses the same tools. In fact, this is a founding requisite for a successful democracy.

Democracy has an infinite number of definitions, different interpretations and philosophical traditions. Winston Churchill used to say: "democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time", this vision of democracy as the final product of a process that has witnessed the many flaws and limits of past regimes. In fact, a democracy is a system of government where a constitution guarantees basic civil and political rights, fair and free elections, and independent courts of law. The power is in the hands of citizens and they have the power to choose representatives. Additionally, democracy is by far the most challenging form of government for both politicians and people of society. Rule of majority is what gives power to democracy, but, as in every governmental system there are two faces of the same coin to observe. Paul Charles Joseph Bourget, P.B. (1852-1935) in his writing "Le disciple" wrote: "Universal suffrage is the most monstrous and inequitable of the tyrannies, because the force of the number is the most brutal of the forces and lacks of audacity and talent.". The French writer understood that the dangerousness of the power of number can ultimately destroy democracy, and his essay was written in the 19th century, way before the pillars of democracy started to tremble and the masses initiated a path of protest through the voting systems that changed the rules of the political game. The utter argument will be discussed in further detail further on in this essay by analyzing recent cases of the global political stage. Back to democracy, the known American journalist H.L. Mencken said: "Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance." This unpleasant but realistic comment sheds light on the limits of democracy in its ideology since the main actors of the play are common individuals that can be manipulated by charismatic leaders or vote the worst option for ignorance or resentment. It is now under the eyes of everyone that so-

cial media make the real difference in these circumstances, they spread and diffuse news and informations instantaneously and many political figures use them to communicate directly with their followers and supporters by eliminating the mediator role of the press or journalists. Mustafa Nayem, a Ukrainian journalist, through his Facebook account in 2013 typed: "Come on Guys, let's be serious. If you really want to do something, don't just 'like' this post. Write that you are ready, and we can try to start something.". In a couple of hours this post had more than 600 comments, continuing to rise and from this short and effective post a national movement was formed to oppose to the conduct of Ukraine's President. Three months later Yanukovych was removed from Presidency. Many other examples can be found, in Germany the far-right alternative for german party won 12.6% of parliamentary seats because influenced by fake rumors, popularized on social media, such as the idea that Syrian refugees get better benefits than native Germans (data from The Economist article of 04/11/2017 "How the world was trolled"). Furthermore, in Kenya online rumors and fake news have further eroded trust in the country's fragile political system. The political strategist, key men in Obama's presidency, Jim Messina said: "Fake news spread on social media is one of the greatest political problems that leaders around the world are facing". In fact, Russia, one of the leading countries in the field of technological innovations, has both a long history of disinformation campaigns and a domestic political culture untroubled by concerns of truth. The misleading informations and the coverage of news can ultimately be used for internal purposes and for export too. Furthermore, Putin's regime used social media to incite covert campaigns in Ukraine, France and even in the case of the Catalan independence (it's suspected). In fact, the Russian government managed to gain control over the "dark side" of social media by training hackers who work for 12-hour shifts and constantly feed the biggest platforms of communication, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, with fake news or with provocative political on-messages.

THE LAST THREAT TO DEMOCRACY:

Considering the concentration of power in the market, Facebook and Google account for about 40% of America's digital content consumption (Brian Wieser of pivotal research data provider) but, the concern about social media run deeper than the actions of specific firms or particular governments. The non-linear communication produced by social media is: "a mechanism for capturing, manipulating and consuming attention unlike any other." Therefore, that power over those media is of immense political importance. In fact, the more info people consume through these the harder it will become to create a shared open space for political debate. Paradoxically, what should have become

the greatest socio-political arena for an open and inclusive discussion from below has turned out to be the biggest weakness for modern democracy. Moreover, one of the greatest German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, expressed himself on the latter topic stating that: "while the connectivity of social media might destabilize authoritarian countries, it would also erode the public sphere in democracies."

In addition, James Williams, doctorate student at Oxford University and former employee at google analyses the concept of 'attention economy' stating that: "Digital technologies increasingly inhibit our ability to pursue any politics worth having. To save democracy we need to reform our attention economy". To make it simple, we can define the attention economy as an approach incorporated in economic theory for the management of information that treats human attention as a "scarce commodity". In fact, attention is a resource, as Matthew Crawford puts it, a person has only so much of it. By definition, "Attention is focused mental engagement on a particular item of information".

But, as Herbert Simon, a well respected economist said: "Information consumes the attention of its recipients." The essence of this idea is that the overdose of information reduces the ability of the individuals to pay attention to the single subject or event. For example, according to the data of "The Economist: How the World was trolled", adult Americans touch their smartphones on average more than 2600 times in a single day and the average piece of content is seen for just a few seconds. "The nature or content of the information delivered is not even relevant, as long as some attention is being paid, the real quality on which the system depends is that the information gets shared". Contrastingly to the Gutenberg era, the new era marked by social media (Zuckerberg era) is founded on the concept that people do not share content solely because it is informative, instead, the information shared has the purpose of placing attention on the single "self" and on the things that people share say about them. They want to be heard and seen through 'likes' on their posts or tweets retweeted giving them an intrinsic satisfaction because they feel respected and perceived by the others. This can be interpreted as another crucial aspect of the non-linear communication that deals with messages delivered and the psychological characteristics behind this process. Furthermore, some types of information spread more easily this way also by passing through social media networks such as viruses, pop-ups and other forms of virtual interaction and disclosure.

Through the gathering of information and data, social media companies know exactly what sort of things go 'viral' and how to make adjustments to messages that don't catch the recipient interest. The Brexit campaign in Britain 2016 was a clear example to this argument since, as 'The Economist' underlines, it served more than one billion targeted digital advertisements, mostly on Facebook, experimenting different techniques and versions. Also Trump's campaign in 2016 used pretty much

the same mechanisms but on a much broader scale, disseminating on Facebook and Twitter different versions of he's advertisements and political messages.

The Economist also says that: "Facebook, Youtube and Instagram use specific algorithms to maximize 'engagement' ensuring that users are more likely to see information that they are more liable to interact with." In addition, This process of polarization tends to lead people into clusters of like-minded things, that can ultimately turn moderate views into more extreme ones. This path to polarization may help to obtain votes in political campaigns because the focus is placed on arguments that are more attractive for certain social groups and their common thinking.

EVOLUTION IN TIME:

Nowadays, democracy is facing one of it's darkest moments in history. The roots of democracy extend far in time, precisely in the ancient greek poleis such as Athens and Sparta and consequently with the Romans. The democratic government of that ancient period was, of course, very different from the modern democracies of the West that we know now but the bedrocks and philosophies were quite similar. Times have changed and in today's lives the social media and communication/information networks, as we already repeatedly said, play a major role. Experts and philosophers are focusing their attention on whether social media and media in general are a threat for democracy. Winston Churchill used to say: "The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter." Britain's ex-Prime Minister with this phrase refers to the lack of culture and knowledge that governs the majority of the people. In the past, schooling and free education weren't very common and statistics show that the best education, knowledge and information were addressed to the elites of society.

The main reason for this phenomenon was the difficult accessibility to knowledge and information. Books, newspapers and articles were understood or more simply read by few intellectuals while the vast majority of citizens couldn't neither write nor read. Maybe it was also a question of control and submission as Che Guevara said: "Ignorant people are easier to govern". Radios and the first televisions were luxuries that only certain social circles could afford. People in general didn't have the desire of knowledge or the curiosity of discovering new things. The process of literacy as a social and humanitarian issue aimed at dismantling these attitudes and the explosion of the technological revolution in the 21st century has facilitated the access to information. The birth of social media and the creation of a myriad of technological items gave the possibility to everyone, everywhere, to keep informed on news, events, national and international issues. Institutions worked all in the same

direction to create an interconnected world where knowledge is power and theoretically everyone has same access to that power. Although these considerations may seem positive, the first half of the 20th century constituted a disaster for mankind also due to the manipulation of mass media by part of diverse exponential subjects of the political context.

The relationship between media and the political sphere was always evident and increased during the years. The use of propaganda in the 20th century was massive compared to previous phases. Main examples of this thesis could be seen in both World Wars (especially the second). There are several ways to instill ideas into the minds and hearts of the general public. One such medium was "art work". Influential artists started to portray their personal political beliefs in their pieces of art. Furthermore, propagandists were conscious that the minds of the masses could be moulded especially during the time of war, just imagine the reign of terror established by Stalin or Hitler that are the most significative examples but there are also many others such as Francisco Franco's Fascist Spain, Pinochet's Chile and the current leader of North Korea Kim Jong-un. Powerful and effective political and cultural messages could stimulate strong feelings among the people. Thus, during the World Wars, art played a major role in propaganda. One of the most common examples of war time art was Picasso's famous masterpiece, 'Guernica', which was produced in 1937 and was a critique against the bombing of Guernica (Northern Spain). During World War II, Hitler used art as a medium to inculcate Nazi ideas into the brains of German people producing a sort of psychological terrorism that was the essence of Hitler's success in mainland Germany. As a matter of fact Hitler Knew what instruments he could use to manipulate people's minds and art was one of those. The Third Rich organized two exhibitions; Degenerate Art and German Art exhibition. These two art exhibitions were organized to promote ideologies and patriotic feelings through the use of propaganda. In fact, propaganda can be defined as "false or overstressed ideas/statements advertising a political leader, government or cause", and it was perhaps the main weapon used during the Cold War and it's spreading was favored by the media. There are many and diverse categories of propaganda such as repressive propaganda, used especially in the totalitarian USSR regime which in this case favored Socialism and shed bad light on democratic ideas and philosophies like entrepreneurship or private autonomy of citizens to prosper. Hannah Arendt, in her book "The origins of Totalitarianism", describes an aspect of the totalitarian regimes that regards the distinction between truth and falsehood: "The result of a consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth is not that the lie will now be accepted as truth and truth be defamed as a lie, but that the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world, and the category of truth versus falsehood is among the mental

means to this end, is being destroyed." The epistemological ground pulled out from under them, would mostly depend on whatever the leader said, no matter its relation to truth.

This kind of brainwash is closely related to Socialist Realism Art: an art style illustrating the working class in everyday life and presenting country leaders like Lenin and Stalin as patriotic heroes. It took over 20 years to dismantle the process of repressive propaganda in the USSR which culminated with Khrushchev secret speech in 1956 and directed the destalinisation campaign. Besides, another shape of propaganda is the American anti-Communism movement that prevailed during the Cold War years which promoted capitalism and democracy and criticized the communist system, not only in media, but also in arts. It focused on concepts such as family, schools and work communities, and emphasized the advantages of living in a free and liberal country, in the best possible world (at least this is what they said).

Propaganda seems to be a phenomenon related with the century that we left behind but, a research written by Alex Hern and published on 'The Guardian' highlights that around the globe, thirty governments are using armies of so called opinion shapers to interfere with elections. Unlike widely reported Russian attempts to influence foreign elections, most of the offending countries use the internet to manipulate opinion domestically: "Manipulation and disinformation tactics played an important role in elections in at least 17 other countries over the past year, damaging citizens' ability to choose their leaders based on factual news and authentic debate". The author insists that: "Although some governments sought to support their interests and expand their influence abroad, as with Russia's disinformation campaigns in the United States and Europe, in most cases they used these methods inside their own borders to maintain their hold on power." This potential threat for governments and the living political systems is a huge current debate and experts of the field want to understand until what point can this epidemic grow.

Democracy was the most successful political idea of the 20th century, therefore it is important to look at why it entered in a crisis and what weight does social media have on this crisis. Furthermore, how democracy can overcome the crisis is another element to take in consideration.

The impact of mass media on the quality of modern democracy is another fundamental argument that is worth analyzing in order to develop a concrete understanding of the topic in itself. In fact, modern societies could not be imagined without mass communication. Television, newspapers, radio and internet are the main sources of information for citizens all around the globe. The real question, nonetheless, is what this means for the functioning of political systems and processes. It is undoubtable that mass media in authoritarian regimes, which are typically controlled tightly by the state, serve to maintain the existing power structure. As Hannah Arendt explains in her book "The

origins of Totalitarianism", the incessant movement and the continuous research for targets and enemies give strength to the totalitarian regime because it distracts the mob from the reality, they are too "busy" to follow the currents for fear, and do not stop to reflect or rationalize. if this perpetual motion were to cease, it would also collapse the totalitarian regime.

On one hand, a concrete example is the pervasive state propaganda disseminated by North Korean media to keep the country's citizens in line. On the other, there is a broad agreement that mass media contribute to democratization processes, as seen for example in Eastern Europe during and after the Soviet Union's collapse.

Furthermore, we have examples of sporting events exploited to make positive propaganda. A quick focus on the episodes that place in Argentina in the late 1970s are crucial to understand the power of media, advertisements and propaganda. In fact, these tools can be used as weapons of mass distraction. On March 24th 1976, Jorge Rafael Videla started the military dictatorship. An infamous period of political repression, arrests, kidnappings and murders. Political dissidents and ordinary citizens with leftist ideas disappeared forever, these men and women will go down in history as "Desaparesidos". Just like any other dictatorship, videla imposed a strict press censorship and restrictions on the freedom of speech, especially for the football World Cup hosted in Argentina. For the occasion Videla started the operation "El barrido" where many disreputable neighborhoods were razed to the ground and in others a wall was erected with beautiful paintings to hide from journalists the horror of what was happening. The midfielder of Argentina's national team, Osvaldo Ardiles, testified that: "No one could contest or criticize the government". Argentina won the World Cup in 1978, while the cruelties and the violations of human rights continued at high rates except during the games of the national team. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, the only silent opposition and movement of protest against the horrifying and inhuman acts, such as harrowing physical and psychological tortures and the flights of death, revealed that thanks to the World Cup, the whole world has know their story. Ardiles also said: "It's incredible to think that when we were playing the final in the River Plate's stadium, at only three hundred or four hundred meters there was the academy of naval mechanics; only later did we find out that it was the headquarter of the military used for torturing the prisoners". These events will remain in the history books as one of the darkest moments of the 20th century. To conclude, the writer Jimmy Burns stated: "It was the most politicized sport circus since the 1936 Olympics". In this case the writer refers to the Olympic games held in Germany where the Nazis used this international competition as a propaganda tool. In fact, the Nazis promoted the image of a new, united and strong Germany, concealing at the same time the anti-Semitic and racist policies of the regime, as well as it's growing militarism.

There is a great deal of controversy when it comes to the issue of whether free mass media serve or harm democracy once it has been established. This explored ground by the London School of Economics, in particular by doctor Lisa Müller, presented some interesting and innovative analysis on this theme. In fact, Lisa Müller states that there is a distinction that has to be made between adherents of what is often referred to as the 'media malaise' theory who claim that because mass media in established democracies mostly operate according to market principles, they disregard their democratic duties. Additionally, these duties have serious repercussions for democracy, causing apathy, cynicism and ignorance with regard to politics among citizens. Besides, Dr. Müller insists in defining different kinds of supporters that are associated to what might be termed the 'mobilization' perspective, that holds that: "the expectations imposed on both the media and citizens by 'media malaise' theorists are unreachable. In what they perceive to be a more realistic assessment, mobilization theorists conclude that media sources provide enough information for citizens to recognize when their interests are in danger, and that media consumption actually increases civic engagement." But, Müller concludes that neither of the positions within this debate are well substantiated by solid empirical evidence. There is insufficient data on democratic media performance and its effects on democratic outcomes across a wide range of western countries. The author proposes two functions that mass media should promote in a democracy: "First, mass media should disseminate politically relevant information to as many citizens as possible and thereby act as a public watchdog. Second, mass media should provide a public forum that reflects the diversity of the society."

A cover story article proposed by 'The Economist' states, through the study of a British political scientist named Bernard Crick, that in a liberal democracy, nobody receives exactly what he wants, but everyone broadly has the freedom to lead the life he chooses. Additionally, Crick suggests that: "without decent information, civility and conciliation, societies resolve their differences by resorting to coercion", so through acts that involve the use of force. He consequently describes how well-known social medias such as Facebook, Google's Youtube and Twitter were influential in the American elections and Russia's trouble-making diffusion. The text reports impressive numbers linked to this topic: "Facebook acknowledged that before and after last year's American election, between January 2015 and August this year, 146 million users may have seen Russian misinformation on its platform. Google's YouTube admitted to 1,108 Russian-linked videos and Twitter to 36,746 accounts." These numbers prove that many Americans during the elections were curious on the Russian political moldings and utilized social medias to keep informed on the events. News and informations reported by the social medias may have contributed in the formation of public opinion.

Not long ago social media held out the promise of a more enlightened politics that comprehended accurate information and effortless communication delivery. We may conclude that instead of bringing enlightenment, social media in many occasions have been spreading venom.

The 'Art of Politics', how Plato used to call it, got uglier and undesired. Part of the reason can be attributed to the spreading of untrue and extremist news that corroded voters judgment and their trust in the institutions or figures/movements in general. In contrast with TV shows, radio stations and other "vintage" media communications, social-media platforms are new and still not completely understood and, at the moment, quite unregulated. In fact, because of how they work, they are of extraordinary influence. They make their money by posting photos, news, stories, personal posts and ads in front of the individuals. These multinationals invest a lot of money in understanding and measuring how individuals react and they know just how to get "under your skin" as Frank Sinatra used to sing. They make a schedule for individuals and they are personalized in accordance to tastes and preferences and through data and algorithms they can determine what catches your eye and attracts your attention. This process creates a dependency for the users and makes it nearly impossible to resist to "scrolling, clicking and sharing…again and again and again". Usually, the news that are diffused on the social networks aren't helpful for truth and commonsense to come to surface, instead, they implement confusional stuff that tend to reinforce people's biases. Ultimately this system contributed to aggravate the politics of contempt that took hold, in the United States at least, in the 1990s. Recently a survey came out and it is present in the text presented by 'The Economist', the findings were quite positive in the sense that: "only 37% of Americans trust what they get from social media". The main reason for understanding this low percentage is that schools and publicities in America took the burden of explaining that the first thing to check in news and articles is the reliability of the source and they addressed a campaign against 'fake-news'. In fact, in the US there is a rigid control over students works and sources must be cited in every essays from middle school onwards, whereas in Italy only in universities there is the same type of rigorous inspection on the sources of datas. Society has created devices to rein in old media and some are calling for social-media companies, to be similarly responsible for what is presented on their platforms; to be more transparent; and to be treated as monopolies that need breaking up. To disband social-media giants in antitrust terms could be a solution, but it would not help with political speech, indeed, by doubling the number of platforms, it could make the industry harder to manage. To conclude the article, The author induces the reader to think with an effect phrase that forecasts the destiny of democracy: "Social media are being abused. But, with a will, society can harness them and revive that early dream of enlightenment. The stakes for liberal democracy could hardly be higher." Demonstrations

of the impairment of democracy are evident everywhere. In Italy, Britain and more recently in Spain the democratic regimes started to falter and the recession is spreading in oil stain.

The deliberative democratic process, as Habermas say's in his writing: "Political communication in media society", aims to construct public will and opinion through "publicity and transparency in the deliberative process, inclusion and equal opportunity for participation and the presumption of reasonable outcomes." The Role of medias is fundamental in this program because the media has the power to select and shape the presentation of messages and also the power to influence and manipulate the agendas of public issues. the examples that come to mind (because of chronological proximity) are the outcomes of the referendums of Italy and Britain. The Italian Constitutional Referendum of last December proposed by the government of Matteo Renzi was a total failure because, thanks to news and information disseminated by tv's, radios and social medias, citizens were focused on the implications of giving too much decisional power to a single man than actually paying attention to the elements presented in the constitutional referendum. Likewise, The Brexit Referendum of June 2016 induced people to think that the best solution to overcome the economic and financial crisis of the last decade was an unexpected fracture with Europe. Also in this case public opinion was contaminated by a long anti-European propaganda that was based on hate and intolerance, favored precisely by Medias. Furthermore, analyzing the role of political communication in contemporary western societies we can see that, on one hand, there has been an impressive increase in the volume of political communication, on the other, the public sphere is dominated by a mediated communication that lacks the defining features of deliberation. Just think of how the tv mediates political issues and how important the correct mediation is. In fact, political communication takes different forms in different arenas.

Finally, we asserted that public deliberation is essential to democracy, but the public can be fooled as well as enlightened. The involvement of Social medias in every sphere of public life is dangerous and a double-edged sword. We have seen how the effects of media are harmful for democracy through the analysis of different cases and texts and the debate is always updatable. In fact, social media have a strong role in defining our ideas, risking to make individuals become very radical in their beliefs. The recent case of the proclaimed independence of Catalonia is another event that could demonstrate such phenomenon, since the heightened and emblematic sense of collectivism could perhaps have been emphasized and sparked by the increased use of these media which ultimately bring together groups of people sharing the same ideals and sentiments, leading those feelings to be incredibly strong. This, as well as the other examples mentioned throughout this

essay, show how much social media can influence our lives, and how much the world can change because of their use.

FAKE NEWS: RUSSIA

A beautiful article written by Vittorio Zucconi on the Italian newspaper 'la Repubblica' warns us of how we are entering a new 'Cold War' made up of technological keyboard spies that can ultimately influence and control the popular referendums and the presidential elections. Democracy had some rough past years in which everyone is under attack, in a way or in another, from the Burundian trade union elections to the United States presidential elections.

It's just how Sam Mendes, the brilliant film director known for the movie "American beauty", made the audience picture it in the twenty-third edition of "007: Skyfall", in the scene where Daniel Craig in the shoes of James Bond meets the cyber-terrorist villain Raoul Silva played by Javier Bardem. The two characters have a first face off in a secret den where they discuss the unethical and virtually devastating power of the new technologies and their dangerousness if used for ruinous purposes.

In fact, the two nations who mostly contributed to the Western idea of Democracy, France and America, are both the number one targets of the Contemporary plague: The hackers. These category of individuals, that disseminate fake news and are thieths of national secrets, work for the Russian government, some say that Putin himself employs them, or are far-right extremists that try to demolish from behind their laptops the pillars of democracy, spreading fatal venom on the internet to change the political consensus of the masses that are protagonists in the 'great elections'. Vladimir Putin, under some recent discoveries, is in control of a mechanism that started during the Cold War, precisely throughout the mandate of Ronald Reagan as US president. In 1982, the director of Kgb, Jurij Andropov, ordered to the agents of the secret service abroad to implement the so-called "Active measures", a program to sabotage rival powers by collecting secret informations and disseminating false documents, façade organizations and other typical techniques of the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the start of the 90s, the CIA discovered the virtual incursions and asked Russia to stop the cybernetic attack aimed at destabilizing peoples trust in Democracy. Russia promised to stop but in in 2008 Tretyakov, chief of the russian intelligence in New York, wrote: "In these years nothing has changed (...) Still today Russia does whatever it takes to embarrass the United States". Putin sustains that it exists a common thread that links Western support to the "Color Revolutions", the ones of Georgia, Ukraine and the revolts of the Arab spring. The "Active measures" are just a protection strategy and a slow revenge. Putin's attempt to sabotage the existing regi-

mes in the Western countries was seen as a despicable demonstration of power from Benjamin Rhodes, deputy national security adviser during the presidency of Barack Obama, who refuses the motivations and logic of the russian President. Putin, as the article of the journal 'New Yorker' entitled: "Le relazioni pericolose", hated Obama, he was considered guilty of launching economic sanctions against Russia after the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of eastern Ukraine. But Hilary was even worse, way more tough and intransigent of Obama. For this reason Putin cleverly supported Trump and the two got along great even before the involvement of Donald Trump on the political stage. Already in 2007 Trump stated that: "Putin has done a huge job in reconstructing the image of Russia and to rebuild Russia itself". In 2013, during a trip to Moscow for the Miss universe contest, Trump tweeted: "Will Putin be there and will he become my new best friend", an ironic tweet that highlights the harmonious relationship between these two characters. Trump also added, on top, that Putin is a great leader who has been able to ridicule Obama's administration.

The biggest expression of this argument is seen in the recent political sphere of the United States; surely it had never happened in the American history that a foreign power was able to interfere in such a blatant way in a electoral consultation. Still, it is crystal clear that that there has been a cyber-attack against Hillary Clinton during the campaign in opposition to Donald Trump. John Podesta, Hillary Clinton election campaign director and former chief of cabinet of her husband Bill Clinton, should know perfectly the dangers of the network and the inherent fragility of communication in the modern era. Yet even an experienced official like him has neglected to use the double verification code to protect the email account leaving a breach for the hackers to download a virus under the form of a simple Gmail team email. The point is that American politics easily lends itself to the so-called "dezinformatsija", term coined by Stalin, the false information disseminated to discredit the official version of the facts or the very concept of reliable truth. In fact, according to the studies of Pew research center, a nonpartisan American fact tank based in Washington, in the last twenty years the Americans have never been so divided on an ideological level as they are today. Their trust in traditional media is at historic lows and fragmentation fuels all kinds of conspiracy theories. Oleg Kalugin, a former KGB general who has lived in the US since 1995, admits that the goal of Russian intelligence is precisely to "increase the division".

There is no real obstinacy towards single individuals or agencies, the real end is the collapse of the democratic system. After the American vote, the alarm for new forms of cyber-war has risen to the highest. The US intelligence warned the Europeans against similar operations to their damage, we've had feedbacks from Netherlands, Germany and of course France. Besides, France during the political campaign concluded with the election of Emmanuel Macron (14th of May 2017) was the

perfect prey since there was the concrete possibility that Martine Le Pen, a right-wing candidate closely related to Putin, could have won the elections. The differences between America and France are evident, the attack to Macron was launched too late to weigh on the final result. Furthermore, the gap between the two candidates, according to the polls, is way larger than the one that separated Trump from Hillary. There is still time to measure the actual consequences of Macron's attempted cyber-defamation. Furthermore, also the referendum for Brexit wasn't completely untouched by the Russian pitfalls, the new prime minister Theresa May raised the alarm that hackers can spy and listen the through the smart phones and the Apple watch. In fact, during the Cabinet meetings, the "intelligent technologies" have been banned, for the threat of having a 'big ear' always "listening". 'The New York Times' gathered signs of Russian Meddling in Brexit Referendum, the article of David D. Kirkpatrick demonstrates this hypothesis by presenting these numbers: "More than 150,000 Russian-language Twitter accounts posted tens of thousands of messages in English urging Britain to leave the EU in the days before last year's referendum on the issue." Furthermore, the journalist continues: "More than 400 of the accounts that Twitter has already identified to congressional investigators as tools of the Kremlin also posted divisive messages about Britain's decision on withdrawing from the bloc, or Brexit, both before and after the vote." In addition, another method the hackers use to influence the democratic system is through abstentionism and the blank and void papers. In fact, these are clear examples of disaffection from the concept of democracy that can favour a particular candidate in opposition to the elité or the restricted circle of the 'establishment'. Its sufficient to think that the fake news spreaded had no impact or didn't damage the figure of Donald Trump. The various Putin, Xi Jinping, Erdogan and Duterte emerged stronger from this cyberwar since they have a ruling policy that is imprinted on totalitarianism and authoritarian regimes. As previously stated, the real target at risk is democracy and all the democratic leaders. The question that we should ask ourselves is whether the hackers started the crisis or they pushed it to the next level just by giving the people further reasons to complain and protest for the promises never kept, the improvements that never came or the projects never realized. The effectiveness of lies and slanders are proportional to the receptivity of the citizens, an audience that believes in the best values of the Western democracies and in the impeccable conduct of its leaders is more difficult to manipulate or unleash. The director of 'La Stampa', Mr. Maurizio Molinari, in many occasions discussed this argument and recently, in a formal interview with myself, stated that something happened during the elections of Trump, during the referendum proposed by Renzi and in the recent Italian elections of 2018, there has been a registered increase of fake ID-accounts and a much greater intoxication of the networks with 'fake news'. Director Molinari said: "More NATO countries believe that "Rus-

sian actors" are involved in an attempt to bring havoc in the West, favoring every instance capable of generating instability. No concrete evidence has yet been made in this regard, but the FBI investigations of at least 12 Russian citizens and a multitude of declarations by NATO leaders suggest that a considerable amount of information has been accumulated for some sort of reason. The definition "Russian actors" is used to indicate the origin of a "malicious interference" without directly appealing into question the government of Moscow." In contrast to Mr. Molinari's idea, many have said that Putin is the head of a vertical system of power, an extremely centralized one, so nothing can escape from his sight or control. Anyways, the theories on this field are plentiful and the proofs are still scarce so many speculations can in the near future be denied or rejected even though the evidences in hand are in some cases indisputable.

CASE STUDY (II):

URBINO UNIVERSITY STUDY 2018: Mapping Italian News

As previously anticipated, in the course of this work, the social media and the dissemination of (fake and not) provocative and viral news to discredit the opponents have had a major impact on Italian politics, and specifically on the campaign for the Constitutional Referendum of 4 December 2016 and then on the electoral campaign for the general elections of 4 March 2018.
Moreover, in a long article of the American magazine "Foreign Affairs", leading magazine for in depth analysis of U.S. foreign policy and relations with Russia, North Korea, the Middle East and others countries, signed by Joe Biden, former Vice President of USA and his advisor Michael Carpenter, a very harsh indictment against Russia was launched. According to the authors: "They acted to influence political campaigns in a large number of European countries, including the Italian referendum on constitutional reform. A similar effort is underway now to support the Nationalist Northern League of Salvini and the 5-star populist Movement to the next parliamentarians."
This is one of the many more or less authoritative reconstructions that lead back to the Russian propaganda the current affirmation of anti-system forces in Italy. Naturally, however, the role of social media and the management of news is a broader issue that strongly affects the quality and the resilience of the Italian democracy.
It is precisely on this subject that the University of Urbino Carlo Bo has worked on and, the Department of Communication Sciences developed a project entitled "Mapping Italian News".

This 'study' presents an analysis of the online media coverage in the run up of 2018 Italian General election illustrating how immigration, corruption and privileges of the elite – also related to a certain rhetoric on the inability of the state to protect the rights of the needy – were in fact the most salient topics throughout the months before and during the election. Both topics were largely central in both Salvini's League and Di Maio's Five Stars Movement agenda. Nevertheless, the leaders most frequently cited in online news articles were Matteo Renzi (PD) and Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia). By deep diving into the contents of main leaders media coverage and respective social media engagement the study documents the centrality of stories unravelling around leaders' legal issues, alleged collusion and scandals.

While the media clusters emerging from the network analysis clearly resembles the tripartite structure of the contemporary Italian politics articulated in centre- left, centre-right and Five Stars Movement, the different weight and articulation within each cluster clearly describe the strengths of M5S and centre-right (largely dominated by the League) and the weakness of the centre-left. In fact, "The analysis, supported by a grant from the Foundation Open Society Institute, depicting a clear profile of the actors and topics that catalyzed the highest social media interactions and thus attention, also illustrates a number of strategies employed by different communities to amplify the reach of contents aligned with own worldview while reframing negative coverage through comments. Overall, explicitly partisan and hyper-partisan sources catalyzed a significant share of the social media interactions performed by the online audience in the lead up of the election. Furthermore, the analysis includes the evaluation and mapping of the Italian media landscape from several perspectives and is based on large-scale data collection of online news articles published on the web, shared and interacted on Facebook and Twitter."

RESULT:

The development that we are now turning our attention on is the result of the survey conducted by the group of researchers at the University of Urbino on over 80,000 news from 4,000 different sources (all numbers and facts are taken precisely from the research).

Immigration, lack of security, the corruption and privileges of the elite, sometimes invoked as the main cause of the failures of the state to protect the rights of the needy (low-income individuals and families, unemployed, retired, elderly, affected by natural disasters), were in fact the most salient topics throughout the months before and during the campaign. The continuous and sometime violent calls for a stronger and stricter immigration policy often sparkled the reactions of the supporter

on the opposite side of the political spectrum resulting in harsh discussions originated by the allegation of incitement to violence, discrimination, and all the sentiments that derive from the hate culture. As the case of Luca Traini and its consequent events clearly pointed out, more than seventy years after the fall of the fascist dictatorship, the rhetoric that unravels around fascism and anti-fascism still plays an effective role in igniting divisive debates in the Italian society. The researchers add: "While this study is devoted to observe online media, it is important to underline that traditional media still plays a prominent role in the information diet of the Italian citizen and television is still the most popular source of news. The first and the second most engaging news stories in the dataset analysed both relates to the popular Sanremo TV music festival (see Appendix 2: Top News). Furthermore, excerpts from TV shows are often consumed online. The popularity of these contents, testified by the volume of social media interactions originated around websites such as "Informazione Vera" (True Information) that mainly publishes political video excerpts from TV shows often accompanied by clickbait titles, speaks by itself about the hybridization of the contemporary Italian mediascape."

Analyzing the specific Italian context, it should be kept in mind that three of the free-to-air and several digital TV channels are still part of the powerful media empire Mediaset directly or indirectly controlled by the leader of Forza Italia, Silvio Berlusconi. According to this perspective, it is striking to observe the low number of online media sources adjudicated to Forza Italia via the Multi Party Media Partisanship Attention Score (MP-MPAS). Furthermore, "While the MP-MPAS does not directly measure the political leaning of a news media source but instead the attention it received by the online supporters of a political party, it is worth to note that the most prominent online media sources of Berlusconi's empire (Il Giornale, TGcom24) have been mostly adjudicated to Salvini's League. Speaking about the overall media ecosystem, it's interesting to add that around one month after the election, Mediaset decided to fire the hosts of three political shows aired by their free-to-air channels. While the official motivation was the low ratings reported by these shows, many political observers argued that the firings were instead politically motivated by the show being biased toward Salvini's League."

Focusing on the specific context of social media, both Twitter and Facebook data collected by the research clearly point out that the online activism of both League and Five Stars Movement' supporters successfully shifted the agenda toward certain news stories and the attention toward certain media sources. League has in fact "the highest number of media sources adjudicated while the sources in the M5S' category gathered the highest volume of overall Facebook interactions. The overall social media attention toward sources adjudicated to M5S was only slightly outperformed by the

cross-partisan category that includes brands such as La Repubblica, La Stampa, Corriere.it and other major mainstream media players." Furthermore, the attention toward sources in the M5S category is concentrated on the official news channels of the Movement such as "ilblogdellestelle and beppegrillo.it".

Similarly, the media coverage around the four main leaders pinpoint a disproportionate social media engagement around Luigi Di Maio, despite the relatively low media attention he received. The volume of engagement around the 7,000 news stories mentioning M5S's leader almost matches the volume of interactions collected by the over 11,000 stories mentioning Matteo Renzi.

The element that emerges clearly from the reading of the study developed by researchers at the University of Urbino is that the news coming from party or partisan sources received, at least in part, more attention on Social media than traditional journalistic newspapers.

Officially, explicitly or blatantly partisan media sources appear, in fact, multiple time in the lists of most popular news sources. Three sources particularly problematic made to the list of top 25 URLs with one entry: 'ilfatto', 'italia24ore' and 'inews24' attempts to mislead the reader starting from its domain name that resembles 'ilfattoquotidiano. In the information section of the website it is clearly stated that some of their news stories may be inaccurate of completely made up. Nevertheless, the article they published the day before the election stating that 500,000 fake vote ballots with the Partito Democratico logo have supposedly been discovered in Sicily was widely shared on Facebook during the election day and it is the 6th most engaged URL in our entire dataset. Italia24ore.com perfectly represents the category of for profit "fake news" and its most popular article, claiming that a senator was slaughtered by two unemployed, made to 17th position of the most engaging URLs. Finally, 'inews24', as surfaced by an investigation published on November 21, 2017 by BuzzFeed, is part of a fringe network of websites and Facebook pages well known for spreading anti-immigrant news and misinformation. Following BuzzFeed' revelations, two Inews24 Facebook pages (nearly 1.5 million followers at the time) have been removed by the platform' administrators. Nevertheless, an inews24 rip-off of an article published by the local newspaper Cronache Maceratesi few hours before discussing the inability of the State to provide an accommodation for an old women affected by the earthquake, also made to the list of most popular news stories. The studies and the analysis reported through this research made by the department of social sciences of the University of Urbino testifies the main argumentation of the thesis in accordance with the numbers and facts revealed in the case relative to the Italian political stage.

One of the most interesting aspects of the research is to understand how it was possible to disseminate on massive scale some contents, according to the study, The team of researchers led by Fabio

Giglietto has monitored for every news the volume of interactions on Facebook every 2 hours, starting from the date and time of publication, for seven days. Thus being able to calculate not only the maximum volume of interactions received but also to reconstruct the history of how the volume has developed and verify the cases in which there was a number of anomalous interactions between one survey and another.

Of those types of interactions, reactions are the most common, followed by comments and shares. The three signals are highly correlated, with comments being the less correlated with the others. Given these regularities, the analysis focused its attention on news stories and media sources showing an odd ratio between shares and comments. As clearly pointed out by the second chapter of the report, news stories with a negative coverage of the Five Stars Movement or positive coverage of Renzi and Berlusconi tend to share a common pattern characterized by a significantly higher proportion of comments over shares. On the contrary, negative coverage of the rivals and positive coverage of the Movement, starting from news stories published by their official party channels, tend to receive an higher volume of shares over comments.

The strategy thus seems to consists in an attempt to reframe a negative news story not aligned with the party views by means of massive interventions in the comments of the social media post. The goal is to exploit Facebook algorithm that pushes most interacted content to the top, in order to show opinions contradicting those expressed in the news story first.

Of course this result, as Prof. Giglietto points out: "can be traced back to a very well organized community that is massively activated in the presence of some news or to automatic forms of sharing and increasing the volume of interactions, so we could advance the hypothesis of boot or other automatic tools ".

TRUMP AND TWITTER

Throughout all the political campaign of Donald Trump, it was clearly visible the use he made of social media, especially Twitter, to express opinions, argue with his opponents or provoke the ones who retain his inadequacy to govern the United States of America. Trump adores writing on Twitter, the social platform has been his most powerful weapon from which he attacked everything and everyone. In fact, in an interview on Fox News, Trump stated that without Twitter, probably, he would have never become President.

In this interview he adds: "Tweeting is like typing. when i publish, it immediately ends up on your show". Trump has no kind of inhibitions on this new forms of communication, so much so that the leaders of all political fronts have repeatedly invited President Trump to contain his frequent and controversial tweets that sometimes produce political "chaos". During the political campaign that saw Trump victorious and Hillary Clinton defeated, there has been an outrageous statement from 'The Donald' that infuriated the democrats: "he encourages a foreign power to do espionage on american soil". In fact the current President invited the Russian government to find the 30 thousand emails that Hillary made disappear, the ones that weren't disclosed to the public, under the scope of the investigation on the improper use that the democratic candidate made of her private address while she was Secretary of State. Alike many other statements, these emails were never found and the FBI and the department of justice concluded that the accusations were baseless. Trump's appeal has created dissent even within the Republican party that traditionally boasts its credentials in the national security field and has in its roots a fierce antagonism with the communist Russia. After the political scandal and the anti-Hillary interference of the FBI, Trump was able to keep silence on the social platform, also thanks to his daughter Ivanka and the spokesperson Kellyanne Conway who suggested him to do so. Trump's main arguments are mostly centered on the false accusation that the opponent doesn't respect the rules and the messages delivered are closely related to far-right websites that are specialized in theories of conspiracy.

Donald Trump's style of communication on Twitter is comparable to that of an outsider, the protagonist of a populist insurrection: aggressive, destabilizing and puzzling. Not the typical behaviour or usage of a President. Furthermore, the advantage for Trump in using Twitter is that there aren't interlocutors that can verify if there are actual proofs of what he is saying. Recently, President Trump tweeted: "If Cuba doesn't accept a better agreement for its citizens, for the cuban-americans and for the United States, i will cancel the agreement." Here Trump was referring to the international laws on extradition, the release of political prisoners and the restoring of political, religious and cultural freedoms.

The importance of Twitter for Donald Trump is obvious and under the eyes of everyone, the co-founder of the social network, Evan Williams, has publicly apologised for the contribution that Twitter has given Trump to gain success.

It seems that Trump lives in an alternative reality, one in which everything is conceded, where the secrets of state are publicly reported on social platforms and where there are no consequences for the actions or words that may alter the status quo.

The new president, with a team composed of family, friends and closest colleagues, has developed a fictitious bubble, a "private political Disneyland" as Vittorio Zucconi wrote in his article on 'La Repubblica', where the fans and supporters can follow the 'exciting' programs and the rhetorics on Trump's achievements. Furthermore, on Facebook, Trump introduced a fake news broadcasting system with a daily press review that presents only positive news for the supporters and himself. In fact, since August 2017, a special false news story conducted by a commentator at the service of the Republican Party, Kayleigh McEnany, was placed to keep up the morale of the current occupants of the White House. Another newscast called "Real News" is directed by Lara Trump, wife of Donald's son Eric, registered in a studio in the luxurious TrumpTower which discusses mainly foreign policy, for example the plans of action with North Korea, and the Labour market's positive results. This misinformative pills are essential to feed the faithful, among whom began to grow some restlessness for the inactivity and broken promises of Trump's government.

The director of 'La Stampa', Mr, Molinari, draws a real picture of the situation that sees involved Russia and US in the elections of Donald Trump. To my question on the genesis of this "dangerous" relation between the United States and Russia, how this relation impacted on Donald Trump's elections and on his way of communicating using massively the social media to pass messages in his favour, Molinari replied: "Russiagate is a complex investigation that, theoretically, can lead to impeachment. The FBI investigates because it suspects a very sophisticated Russian operation but so far the evidence against Donald Trump is not there: if the Russian operation was really there, maybe Trump was not aware of it. It's another aspect of cyberwar. On Trump's communication method, on the other hand, it is a completely different story: there is information and data. And they are summarized in one method: conflict. To make the voters feel that Trump continues to be anti-establishment." The possibility of impeachment gives the question a serious mold and would be a sore spot for the 45th President of the United States of America.

CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA

Cambridge Analytica is a United Kingdom political, data analytics, advertising, and consulting firm, which has offices in London, New York, and Washington DC and has recently been accused of illegally sourcing Facebook data and using it to influence a variety of political campaigns. The latter include those of the American Senator Ted Cruz and also of President Trump, as well as the Bre-

xit campaign, resulting in the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU. The argument is of utmost novelty so many facts are still emerging or uncertified.

According to the reconstruction of "The Guardian", the british daily newspaper, which raised and closely followed the Cambridge Analytica case, "the data analytics firm used personal information harvested from more than 50 million Facebook profiles without permission to build a system that could target US voters with personalized political advertisements based on their psychological profile." Employees of Cambridge Analytica, including the suspended (until further notice) CEO Alexander Nix, were also filmed boasting of using manufactured sex scandals, fake news and dirty tricks to swing elections around the world. What emerged during the investigation was that: "the social media company Facebook has received a number of warnings about its data security policies in recent years and had known about the Cambridge Analytica data breach since 2015, but only suspended the firm and the Cambridge university researcher who harvested user data from Facebook earlier in this 2018. A former Facebook manager has warned that hundreds of millions of users are likely to have had their private information used by private companies in the same way. Investigators from Britain's data watchdog raided Cambridge Analytica London offices over Friday night, and the main consumer protection body in the US is reported to have opened an investigation into whether Facebook has violated privacy agreements. Billions of dollars have been wiped off Facebook's stock market valuation this week as a growing #DeleteFacebook movement and regulatory fears have spooked investors." These consequences reported by The Guardian are an appetizer of the whole scandal that still today is evolving and understanding new unrevealed truths about the actors and the aim of the cyber-attack.

During the Brexit referendum, The Guardian states: "a digital services firm linked to Cambridge Analytica received a £625,000 payment from a pro-Brexit campaign organisation which had been given the money by Vote Leave, potentially violating referendum spending rules. Shahmir Sanni, a pro-Brexit whistleblower, told the Observer newspaper that he had passed evidence supporting his claims to the police and the Electoral Commission. Separately, around £3.4m was spent by different Brexit Leave campaigns with Canadian data firm Aggregate IQ during the run up to the EU referendum, including £2.7m by the official Vote Leave campaign (40% of their total budget). Christopher Wylie says he played a role in setting up AIQ in 2013, around same time he worked for Cambridge Analytica. AIQ have say they have never entered into a contract with Cambridge Analytica and had no communications with them during the referendum campaign."

Simply by researching on the internet, its clear that the British electoral law forbids coordination between different campaign groups, which must all comply with strict spending limits. If they plan tactics or co-ordinate together, the organisations must share a cap on spending.

This complicated story soon became a global scandal that overwhelmed the social media giant Facebook with heavy effects on its reputation and its listed stock to touch, at the time the case broke, minus 14%.

In an interesting interview on La Repubblica made by the journalist Enrico Franceschini to this scientist punk, Christopher Wylie, who was fundamental in the divulgation of the scandal and the acceleration of the investigations.

At the question: "In addition to the Trump campaign in the US and the Brexit referendum in Britain, were there other countries and parties among Cambridge Analytica customers? Wylie answered: "I remember several projects in Europe, I know that they did something in Italy, indeed Italy is the only one I know with certainty, but I do not remember in which parties. I dealt with America, I wasn't directly involved in your country." He also described his work environment, there were some italians there who worked for them but not "officially". Furthermore, Christopher adds that: "The company that I helped to create wasn't limited to using 'big data' collected illegally to manipulate elections: it created fake news, corrupted politicians, compromised candidates in unfair ways…" He continues: "When I understood that the company had a political agenda, the one selected by Steve Bannon and his lender Robert Mercer that came after me."

Steve Bannon is an American media executive, political figure, strategist and former executive chairman of Breitbart News. Bannon was also the ex sovereign strategist of president Trump, until his involvement in the whole scandal.

Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg, on Tuesday 22 May, went to the European Parliament's headquarter in Bruxelles to reassure the EU leaders and the president of the EP, Antonio Tajani, on the whole case of Cambridge Analytica. It was a declaration of intent on which President Tajani promised to oversee, In fact, Mr. Zuckerberg began with the traditional apologies for what happened with the probable improper use of data of 87 million users, nearly 3 million of those coming from european countries. "An error has been made, but it won't happen again" said Zuckerberg, acknowledging that he did not foresee "Russian interference in the US presidential elections." Facebook's CEO justifies his team by claiming that they were focusing on the traditional computer threats such as bullying, terrorism, hate speech and fake news. It's interesting to understand that facebook had a methodological transformation in the past years, it passed to a 'proactive attitude', also thanks to the preventive reports of the artificial intelligence. "We aren't able of deciding what

is false or not" admitted Zuckerberg during this meeting, he added consequently that: "there is no classification based on political orientation", in response to an uncomfortable question made to him on Facebook's information monopoly and data sharing efficaciousness.

Furthermore he promised: "I will make the social more transparent, an independent committee of experts and academics will constantly monitor in real time what happens on the network." Zuckerberg took some responsibility for the current political state of the country, he felt "very bad" for the russian intervention on the social platform, he added that he placed great expectation on the moral and civil conscience of citizens by taking them for "good" and giving them full liberty of expression so to positively influence the network. But they didn't expect or imagine that a foreign power could use the social media to divert the US presidential elections with the proliferation of fake news. The young billionaire admitted that: "we have been slow in identifying this new type of attack and in the future we have to make progress…"

Facebook has undertook two new steps for the future: one, to ask the owners of the largest Facebook pages to verify their names by providing the company with a copy of the identity documents. Second, it will show Facebook users in the United States more information on each political announcement, there will be information on who manages it and other useful items to recognize the validity and officiality of the page. "An even higher transparency standard compared to that traditionally adopted for advertisements." Conversely, Transparency standards may not be enough for the modern phenomenon of the fake news. Facebook continues to underestimate the problem, probably because even the platform itself doesn't know what the cure may be, it's difficult to protect a castle that contains 2,1 billion people. The real question is weather at some point Facebook will be too big to be managed. Up to now Zuckerberg refuses to think that a democratically managed social platform, a collectively controlled network, is the best way to proceed, no one else could do Mark Zuckerberg's job. In fact, he closed his speech at the EP asking for trust, because in its 14 years of existence there have been many problems, many of which the general public is not aware of, but, he said: "I started from a college room and now this is a company of unprecedented breadth and we will surely succeed to solve these problems." Zuckerberg's mea culpa" doesn't explain why, when in 2015 Facebook came to understand from 'The Guardian' the data abuses of Cambridge Analytica, he didn't say anything to the users nor to the public opinion. Nevertheless, recently he talked about the scandal of CA and the data theft attributable to the researcher Aleksandr Kogan, the man that would have obtained personal information about 50 million users, according to 'The Wall Street Journal', and then exploited them for some election campaigns (in America and elsewhere) and probably affect the vote, even with illegal methods.

The accusations on Facebook by the british Parliament, the EU Commission, the Congress of Washington and also Wall Street were a critical strike for the 'social giant'. The main concern is precisely the theme of rules and responsibility. In many other fields of economic activity, businesses have the duty to respect consumers. If a consumer product is faulty or dangerous, it triggers incriminations and trials, repair of damage and compensation to victims. In the network, irresponsibility is sovereign and is often a judicial "no man's land". The rules were written by them in absolute liberty. Maybe it's time to set some limits or boundaries to the "absolute" power and dominion in the hands of these social owners.

CONCLUSION:

"I do not want to have to choose between having a democracy or giving up technology: we are entitled to both. but we must regulate the use of big data.". These are the words of the elusive Christopher Wylie that some have compared to the figure of Edward Snowden, the american computer professional who revealed the world that NSA and CIA were secretly spying and controlling us. He adds that Big data are like utilities: we can't live without them. We need electricity, but if the wires are discovered we risk of getting the shock. The same applies to the web: entering is not a pact with the devil, the point is what social media are allowed to do with data. Mr. Wylie insists that the data itself is not the problem. Indeed: "they have a lot of potential to make the world even better and everyday life even easier. Big data is just an instrument. like a knife. It can be used to feed and can be used to kill. everything depends on the use you make of it."

Furthermore, in this interview presented on 'La Repubblica', to C. Wylie is asked if it can be expected a future that follows the script of the notorious Netflix series: Black Mirror (the futuristic and anti-technology show that projects the audience into a world governed by smartphones that control the individual and describes different aspects of a horrible future but likely to become reality). It comes to mind the third episode (second season) of the british tv series, "The Waldo Moment", that is the description of a fictitious yet realistic future Parliamentary election in which a failed comedian who is the voice-actor and digital puppeteer of a blue cartoon bear named Waldo, who comically interviews politicians and other authority figures, decides to enter the ongoing election to become the town's member of Parliament. Of course through the help of political campaign experts and the use of a scurrilous and politically incorrect language, Waldo the puppet gets public attention insulting his opponents of the Labor and Conservative parties. The joke takes unexpected proportions until the situation gets out of hand and the country is taken over by anarchy and chaos.

We are not so far from this scenario. In fact, in this essay, we described many political scandals in different geographical areas. All of them had a common element. The involvement of hackers during periods of institutional change that go through the big votes. Recently, one last striking example concerns the viral campaign on social media that has been unleashed to demand the resignation of the President of the Italian Republic. Sergio Mattarella rejects the name of Paolo Savona, well-known Euro-skeptic, as Minister of the Economy and on Twitter, practically simultaneous, there are 400 new profiles that unanimously demand the immediate resignation. Profiles created by foreign, Estonian and Israeli servers in particular. Everything starts from Twitter, after a few hours the debate on the issue of resignation becomes viral on other social networks, as well as on other media. Everything is useless, the government will be formed and Savona will not be the minister of the economy. Could this be a failed attempt of interference? Is this another sign of the extreme fragility and permeability of our system? The chief editor of La Stampa, Maurizio Molinari, responded to these questions by stating that: "On this subject an investigation by the judiciary is under way. Waiting to know the conclusions, the story highlights the need to improve the cyber-defenses of our country. Not only strategic and military infrastructures but also civil ones. Italy is one of the most vulnerable Nato countries to digital incursions and needs to quickly acquire a new generation of defenses". It seems like if the circumstances of time are imposing new and adequate rules, a revision of the existing laws that too easily have been bent or bypassed, to secure the stability of governments that can be victims of attacks that leave no fingerprints nor physical signs but can be even more deadly.

According to the cases presented, which are of current debate in the highest ranks of public and private institutions, the technologies developed and the world of social media are of complex nature. common people do not understand it fully and maybe the ones that do, don't conceive its potential, in the positive and in the negative aspects. It's true that technological devices simplified our lives and accelerated the processes of urbanization, literacy, knowledge and globalization; it is also true that fifty years ago nobody could have guessed or imagined that the technological culture would be rooted in such depth and that the modern individual can no longer detach himself from essential tools such as the smartphone. We are part of a huge revolution that goes beyond our most vivid imagination, paradoxically, the realities narrated by the science fiction movies seem a foreseeable outcome. Will it be like Blade Runner's dystopian future dominated by replicants, a world without crime like Minority report where technologies can prevent a murder or crime by anticipating the culprit's actions, or are we going to receive a humanoid robot that performs all the functions that we teach him and that can replace us in the "real world" like in the movie 'I, Robot' of 2002? Some

would say that the prophetic initial scene of 'The Matrix', the cinematic masterpiece of 1999 with Keanu Reeves and Laurence Fishburne, is a warning for the users of the networks to choose between the red pill, which allows us to see the world for what it really is, with all its subterfuges, state and political secrets, internal manipulations and poison we feed on, or the blue pill that transports us into a digital reality, made up of codes that chain our minds to a fake and artificial system. In fact, even if ironic, future generations could actually leave with the constant doubt of an imaginary and techno-created world that wraps and controls them like the Matrix. In the memorable scene of the dialogue between the young programmer Thomas Anderson, living an Online life as the hacker Neo, and the head of the resistance Morpheus, truth will be revealed and the artificial construct based on a lie will begin to crumble after the protagonist takes consciousness of the simulation. Morpheus clearly explains that the life that Neo led up to now has been dictated by the system: "The Matrix is everywhere, it is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your TV, you can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth."

"What truth?" asks Neo impatiently, "That you are a slave Neo, like everyone else you were born into bondage. Into a prison that you cannot taste or see or touch. A prison for your mind."

This could be the next future, but, we have to avoid it, the problem is how.

how to prevent the social media from a formidable accelerator of democracy from below become the worst enemy of democracy and therefore of humanity?

despite the many diagnoses as well as case studies at the moment nobody seems to have identified a cure. Mr. Molinari, in the interview delivered to myself, on this topic stated: "social networks mark the beginning of digital freedom and so the possibility of expressing personal opinions on the web without restrictions. But to become democracy, freedom needs rules. This was true at the time of the Athenian Agorà as at the time of Rousseau and Montesquieu. And it is also true today in the digital reality. We are therefore in a phase of transition. To transform the social network from the laboratory of freedom to a new instrument of democracy, there is a need for new rules and the problem starts here because it is not a nation state but a global community, then who has the authority and legitimacy to define these rules and how can they be drafted.

Some say that this function could be interpreted by social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) but this would assign unprecedented powers on the digital rights of billions of individuals. So, the real theme is what path to follow in order to come to decline the principles of democracy in the reality of the web. It is a 21st century challenge that involves a new type of rights: digital rights".

To conclude, from the studies of an authoritative journalist who has followed the topic with great attention, we can establish that the questions are many and continue to be unanswered. But this does not mean that we have to give up the challenge.

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