



Os 4 D's da midiatização profunda (dataficação, desregulamentação, desinstitucionalização, desorientação) e a realidade mediada por bolhas de informação e opinião nas redes sociais¹

The 4 D's of deep mediatization (datafication, deregulation, deinstitutionalization, disorientation) and the reality mediated by information and opinion bubbles on social networks

Andréa Rosevell Souza dos Santos

Keywords: Deep Mediatization; Datafication; Bubbles; Social Networks.

As a phenomenon, the bubbles of information and opinion on digital social networks do not yet seem to have a definitive framework or academically structured contours. Bubbles are described as the result of information curation by algorithms and artificial intelligences (Pariser, 2011), synonymous with echo chambers, information enclaves (Sunstein, 2001) and also ideologically homogeneous political groups. Both bubble filters and echo chambers refer to the changes in the virtual public space from the individualized personalization of media content for consumption, carried out through the support of artificial intelligence technologies. In both cases, however, the authors do not

¹ Paper presented at the VI International Seminar on Research in Mediatization and Social Processes. POSCOM-UFSM. Santa Maria, RS, Brazil.



elaborate a rigorous and definitive way to observe and define the phenomenon. As Bruns (2019) notes, the term is used metaphorically. Its wide acceptance and use by academics and traditional media is due to its "apparent common sense".

Sunstein (2001) uses the metaphor of the echo chamber to explain, above all, the social impacts of technologies that, according to him, compose an "architecture of control", as opposed to the "social architecture", reiterating the "homophilic" behavior of humans – their tendency to establish connections with cognitively consonant people. As a result, according to Sunstein (2017), echo chambers are producing more trust for political actors, but increasingly extremist group behaviors, with tendencies to polarization. Sunstein (2017) believes that echo chambers create, socially and technologically, "parallel universes" that threaten democracy by producing conditions of vulnerability for individuals on the network.

Pariser (2011) coined the term filter bubbles to describe mechanisms present in the infrastructure of digital social networks, such as *Facebook or Google, Twitter, Instagram*, to offer customized content and a tailored vision of the world that fits perfectly with the initial beliefs of the individual/user. According to him, bubble filters are the means by which algorithms exercise agency and communicative automation. They are the result of the "training" of algorithms, based on data such as "likes", comments, shares, time spent on each publication on Facebook, but mainly, the comparison and approximation of user profiles with similar behaviors based on this data with the basic objective of transforming digital media into a less chaotic, even cozy place, surrounded by people and things that you like the most the user, providing a "purified" experience, which has become an unprecedented societal problem.

The observation of the political scenario and the public debate in recent years point to the centrality of the infrastructures of digital social networks platforms for the organization of collectivities around political themes, as described by Castells (2013). Thus, the work of Sunstein (2001) and Pariser (2011), when they touch on the growing



difficulties for the exchange of ideas between ideologically distinct groups in virtual social networks and for the establishment of social commitments, marks an important point for the discussion about the future of democratic decision-making based on these structural conditions. Such syntheses give clues about a series of cumulative social and cultural factors, imbricated in the definitions of bubbles, which, without a doubt, accompany the *default* of technologies; but not only.

There is an apparent mistake, according to Bruns (2019), in the treatment of *Big Tech* as the main villains of the populist rise, the growing social and political polarization or illiberal political movements on the internet. The author points out that the problem of the diffusion of political information in virtual social networks is fundamentally social and, therefore, cannot be explored only by technological bias. This means that bubbles cannot be treated generically as a matter of social networks, but rather as a social strategy, based on the movement of knowledge and languages through the exercise of communication, addressed to the field of media and the political field.

The present study wants to go further in the study of this structure — bubbles — and for this purpose it proposes a bibliographic research that seeks to oppose the theories of mediatization of Eliseo Verón (1994) and the construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1976) through the deep mediatization and mediation of data infrastructure of Couldry and Hepp (2017). It is based on the assumption of a social world subjected to Deep Mediatization (Couldry and Hepp, 2017), dependent on and guided by data-driven communication infrastructures and changes in the self, collectivities, and social order resulting from them. The phenomenon includes both quantitative and qualitative implications that provide keys to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of socialization and communication in the digital social world.

In other words, bubbles are presented as the fruit of mediatization. In other words, they are the result of a process whose roots are linked to a macro, hybrid scenario — *online and offline* — and express what has been fueled by the succession of various social crises



that have led to disbelief, deinstitutionalization, deregulation, disorientation, individualism and insurrection of reticent publics through technological communication devices.

Couldry and Hepp (2017) suggest that the current process of mediatization is reaching its fourth acceleration milestone. A phase characterized by the triumph of robotic engineering and the instrumentalized use of data (*datafication*). According to Couldry and Hepp (2017), the interrelationship between technology-based communication and everyday practices has become more complex over the years and has deepened qualitatively (referring to the connection with social processes) and quantitatively (referring to the amount of media available to connect), generating new practices of socialization and interaction, at the pace dictated by database technologies in a process of "deep mediatization" (Couldry and Hepp, 2017); A phenomenon that suggests the acute adhesion of communication technologies, especially database infrastructures, to the social fabric, so that their camouflage and naturalization are already part of what is understood as reality.

"The media now means [...] platforms that, for many human beings, are literally the spaces in which, through communication, they stage the social" (Couldry and Hepp, 2017, p.13). Algorithms, artificial intelligences, *chatbots*, and data-driven social media infrastructure are increasingly integrated, packaged, and naturalized, so that their values are no longer perceived or problematized by people within everyday practices. Its progressive use has been modifying the nature and quality of social interdependence in relation to it. In this area, the study understands digital social media platforms, filter bubbles, disinformation and polarization, as a convergent set of developments in a context that includes intertwined technological and social processes, forming a hybrid system of communication (man-machine) for power disputes, which cross the field of communication (Bourdieu, 1997) and are rooted in all other social fields (Bourdieu, 1989), reconfiguring the nature of communicational, social and cultural processes.



The bubbles are not a "fact of the media" (Braga, 2012, p.44) or of the expansion and predominance of the culture industry over society. They are consequences of an aggregate of mechanisms of the sectors of society, including "non-media" sectors in relation to the sphere of legitimacy of the media. They are structurally incomplete processes (Braga, 2012) of flows in circulation in the zones of dispute for processes, means and products, and target the field of media and politics. The notion of deep mediatization conceived by Couldry and Hepp (2017) is used to develop an understanding of the consequences of social processes and the new possibilities of order formation from the use that actors make of digital media and the nature of the constellations they form.

As Couldry and Hepp (2017) also did, this study assumes a kinetics of tensions structuring the phenomenon of bubbles, in addition to a fluctuation of power related to communicative practices for the construction of meaning and legitimacy. To walk in this territory, the present study requires the ideas of Berger and Luckmann (1976), since these authors add perspectives on the organization of human thought and activity and social relations as an instrument of struggle for survival and power from the exercise of language, signs and symbols. The authors' fundamental statements refer directly to the processes of construction and definition of "reality" and "²knowledge", ³hence their fundamental presence for the intellectual effort, employed here, to pursue the way in

² "For our purpose it will suffice to define 'reality' as a quality pertaining to phenomena which we know to have a se independent of our own volition [...], and to define 'knowledge' as the certainty that phenomena are real and possess specific characteristics" (Berger & Luckmann, 1976, p. 11)

³ Berger and Luckmann (1976) point out that, when dealing with "reality" and "knowledge" they do not refer to a type of knowledge governed by specific laws, but rather to deal with everything that is "knowledge" in society, that is, with what men "know" as "reality" in their daily lives, via non-theoretical or pre-theoretical means. (Berger & Luckmann, 1976, p. 30ap)



which the self and collectives organize themselves in virtual social networks to establish a credible reality and "reform institutions" based on this idea.

Based on this proposal, the phenomenon of information and opinion bubbles in virtual social networks can be understood with at least two dimensions: 1) technological: related to the political and economic logics of *big techs in the* production of algorithms and artificial intelligences that form bubbles, as well as the penetration of these logics in the daily lives of individuals and in the media field; 2) Social: bubbles as a result of human social practices of configuration and reconfiguration of technologies, especially for power struggles in the media field.

The bubbles are composed of biological individuals in search of the "we", in a highly technological symbolic environment, surrounded by artificial intelligences capable of attracting and retaining cognitively consonant people, as well as capturing, analyzing and transferring information to aspiring leaders in or out of the media field. Bubbles are areas of insurrection where leaders are more or less aware of their role as influencers of the desires and utopias of groups thirsting for a "good world" (Pariser, 2011), who never contradict their truths.

References

BERGER, Peter L.; LUCKMANN, Thomas. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Petrópolis, Vozes, 1976. 274p.

BOURDIEU, P. The forms of Capital. Originally published in "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital" In: *Soziale Ungleichheiten (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2)*. Goettingen: Otto Schartz &Co. 1983. (pp 98-183). Translated for English by Richard Nice.

_____. *Sobre a televisão*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed., 1997.

_____. *O poder simbólico*. Trad. THOMAZ, Fernando. 11th ed. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1989.



Anais de Resumos Expandidos
VI Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas
em Mediatização e Processos Sociais

ISSN 2675-4169

Vol. 1, N. 6 (2024)

BRAGA, José Luiz. Circuitos versus campos sociais In: Mediação e Mediatização / Jeder Janotti Junior, Maria Ângela Mattos, Nilda Jacks, Organizers; foreword, Adriano Duarte Rodrigues. - Salvador : EDUFBA ; Brasília :Compós, 2012, p.31-52

BRUNS, Axel. "Echo Chamber? What Echo Chamber? Reviewing the Evidence." Paper presented at Future of Journalism 2017, Cardiff, 15 Sep. 2017. <http://snurb.info/files/2017/Echo%20Chamber.pdf>.

———. Gatewatching and News Curation: Journalism, Social Media, and the Public Sphere. New York: Peter Lang, 2018a.

———. "Facebook Shuts the Gate after the Horse Has Bolted, and Hurts Real Research in the Process." Internet Policy Review, April, 2018b. <https://policyreview.info/articles/news/facebook-shuts-gate-after-horse-has-bolted-and-hurts-real-research-process/786>.

CASTELLS, Manuel. Redes de Indignação e Esperança: Movimentos Sociais na Internet Age. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2013

COULDRY, Nick. Mediatization or mediation? Alternative understandings of the emergent space of digital storytelling. *New media & society*, 10 (3), p. 373-391, 2008.

COULDRY, Nick & HEPP, Andreas. The mediated construction of reality. John Wiley & Sons, 2016.

SUNSTEIN, Cass. # Republic: Divided democracy in the age of social media. Princeton university press, 2017.

———, Cass R. Republic. com. Princeton university press, 2001.

VERON, Eliseo. Diagrama para análise da mediatização. *Diálogos*, 1997, 48, pp.9-16.

VERÓN, Eliseo. Mediatization, political communication and mutations of democracy. Taken from Hal Open Science: <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01487121>, 1994).

VERÓN, Eliseo Mediatization of the Political: In *Communication and Politics* (pp. 220-235). Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial. 1995