The time dimension of liberal democracy

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by

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1. Subject and goals

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the relationship between temporality and the changing nature of the liberal democracy. In short, the objective of this dissertation is:

> To determine the adaptability of liberal democracy to changing circumstances; however, not singly considered but as a political system rooted in a concrete time conception.

In order to achieve this goal, we will have to verify or refute the following hypothesis:

- Liberal democracy has a temporal conception embedded in.

- This time conception is one of the major influences in liberal democracy's understanding of the world.

- This temporal conception has not only shaped liberal democracy present being but foreordains its future evolution as well.

- All this is applicable *mutatis mutandis* to other political systems.

Finally, there is the implicit supposition that the changes the future have in store for liberal democracy are, somehow, different in nature respect of

the previous ones that it has previously faced in his history, this send us to what we could call secondary hypothesis.

- The foreseeable challenges for liberal democracy are, qualitative and quantitative, different from those it has experienced in the past.

- Liberal democracy will have to undergo deep transformations in order to remain meaningful after these changes.

After having gone all these hypothesis will be in disposition to respond, not only to the main objective of this dissertation, but also to offer a forecast of the possible evolution of liberal democracy at the light of its incoming challenges.

2. Justification

One of the strongest critiques that liberal democracy has suffered is because of its genealogy. From one side there is the argument that liberalism was not particularly interested in democracy, that its main concerns were others and that its reunion with democracy can be labeled as a marriage of convenience. On the other side, there is the fact that the world in which liberalism was born is not the present world, things have changed a lot. Without pretending denying or verifying these arguments here, we can make an initial reply, first even if we consider liberal democracy an arranged marriage it has worked quite well and endures the pass of time better than more "passionate" relations [1] ; second, to resort to the historic origin as a source for criticism seems too cheap, because everything has a specific beginning in a concrete time, and some of them as shameful as can be, the record of democracy, for instance, is nothing to be so proud of. We have to conclude that historical

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[1] Or as Ferran Requejo puts is: "(...) the success that political liberalism has achieved when offering a coherent, normative and organizing basis; basis that have proved to stable and, at the same time, sensitive to the economic and social changes in contemporaneous societies." (Ferran Requejo, 1994).

origins are important but ideas, concepts and political systems do evolve through time, and sometimes is just not fair to blame the children for the sins of the parents, or the grandparents.

However, we can not simply deny that the historical source, the cradle if you want, has some influence on the being and development of theories or political systems. On a shallow level we can pinpoint the specific features designed for the reality of a determinate moment and that vary over time; for instance, we could point that initially only white, property owner, men could vote in liberal democracies, and that how due to some social processed this has changed until present universal suffrage. At this shallow level there is so far you can go, because no matter how revelatory can be a trait of its initial intentions, if this trait shifts the intention becomes altered as well; of course, we can always speculate how much of the original ideology remains. A research at this level can help us to understand the context in which a theory was born, if you may, it can help us to put things into perspective; but it is doubtful that it will provide us with the keys to understand the present reality of the object to study. Let me insist on this point putting a reverse example: any present formulation of direct democracy may use Athenian democracy as an early reference, but it would be unfair to critique such a formulation on the basis that Athenian suffrage was reduced to a few men, at present time universal suffrage is an historic achievement deeply tied to any formulation of democracy, thus, and despite there is no historic precedent of direct democracy with universal suffrage, it is highly unlikely that it could be implemented any kind of direct democracy with a restricted suffrage; at least without great contestation.

But there is another level, a deeper one maybe, in which the influence of the historical origin is more present. And this is the cultural context, the background of a theory, concept or political system. The cultural context in which a theory is born gives it more that just an appearance, and a frame of references it gives a particular understanding of the world; a set of basic givens that spares the theory of some preliminary work, we could say that the cultural context acts as the genetic code of the theories, concepts and other intellectual constructions created within its domain. The analogy is not gratuitous, the same way we cannot negotiate the shape and faculties our genes have given us, a theory cannot change the

givens that its cultural context has embedded in it. And it is at this level and trying to detect these givens when the study of the historic origin can provide us with clues about the present functioning of a theory.

One of the most important givens in any cultural context is its time conception. Every culture, implicitly or explicitly has an understanding of how time unfolds; this is one of the essential traits on any culture, one of its defining features. And at the same time is something so rooted in its cultural subconscious that is seldom explicitly recognized. For instance, the Western notion of time is that there is a past, a present and a future, in this order, and that time never goes back. This is so central in our ordinary life that we could not function without past, present and future tenses in our languages. But then take another cultures where time is different, we could find examples of cultures without tenses [2] , there are other cultures where time repeats itself [3] , and even traditions where time is one with consciousness itself [4] . At this point, we begin to realize that time conceptions may play an important role as one of these cultural givens. However, very little attention has been given to this issue as a variable to differentiate political systems, or any kind of theory for what it matters.

Now it may be starting to be clear that the object of this research borrows from several branches of political science: political theory, since we will be dwelling mostly within its conceptual territory; comparative politics, as we will resort occasionally to the comparison with other political systems; and political anthropology, as we are interested in the cultural, or anthropological, underpinnings of liberal democracy. Of these three only the third one has dealt with the issue of temporality; but mostly for anthropological reasons or interests. However, political science as a discipline has remained quite oblivious of temporal conceptionss. This

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[2] Among other known examples we have: the Hopi language with no verb tenses; the Australian aborigine dream time which is untranslatable to our time frame; the Bantu that lack even a substantive for time, for them time has no entity until an event manifests it.

[3] The most now example are Indian cyclic conceptions of time, where we "are confronted with the infinite repetition of the same phenomenon (creation-destruction-new creation)" [Mircea Eliade, "The Myth of Eternal return"]

[4] Zen is the most distinguished example of this conception " In climbing a mountain or crossing a river, I found myself in the present, and if it is me, time is. As I am here and now, time cannot be separated from me." [Dôgen, Shôbôgenzo, Uji]

research aims to offer an new approach to the understanding of liberal democracy and its functioning, past and present, but also future.

And here is when we can introduce the futures studies part [5] of this study. In this part we will attempt to understand how may liberal democracy react and/or adapt to the foreseeable changing circumstances in society. About the subject of the future of democracy, there is ample literature in the futures studies field, which counts many political scientists. But few, if any, take liberal democracy time conception into account, which puts this research in disposition of making a fresh contribution.

We could say that the most original trait of this dissertation, as a whole, is the combination of an unusual object in one side: the relationship liberal democracy-temporal conception; with a mixed methodology on the other, borrowing from several disciplines and approaches: political theory, comparative politics, political anthropology, probably anthropology itself and futures studies.

3. State of the question

It has already been said that this dissertation will navigate through several disciplines and approaches. We can divide the research for the purpose of this point into several blocks, these blocks do not always correspond directly to any academic field, but they fit the logic of the study. Moreover, this classification will allow us to discriminate which parts of the dissertation will aim to improve the existing knowledge and which ones will more focus on revision and definition tasks. These blocks are: definition, time conception, comparison and futures studies.

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[5] Futures Studies is not completely nor widely accepted as an academic discipline. However, it is taught in several universities around the world, it has an extensive corpus of practitioners, a comprehensive and systematized literature; and it is broadly accepted as a professional activity with associations, meetings and symposiums to support its professionals. In this sense I believe it is valid to say that a part of the dissertation falls under the futures studies label, mostly because it will use its methodology, literature and perspective.

Definition

Although it is one of the most important parts of the dissertation, after all it will determine the rest of the research, this will be one of the parts devoted to revision; the object of revision will be political theory. For the reason already explained the interest in political theory will be clearly instrumental, to borrow the information to define precisely the concepts the study will use later on: liberal democracy, liberalism, political system and others. In this block we will do a survey of the question, trying always to remain within the conceptual mainstream as the intention is to depart, as much as possible, from non controversial standpoints. This could prove to be difficult enough since democracy and liberalism are polyhedral concepts with distinctive currents that cannot always be reconciled. Let us say that when defining the intention will be more of erudition than of critical examination, this task is left for other authors and other studies. But even without a polemic intention defining liberal democracy can be a controversial matter. First we have to acknowledge the two traditions converging in it: democracy and liberalism.

The democratic contribution dictates that the process of decision-making implies some level of collective contribution, not only that the decision is taken collectively, but the process and its results are under the surveillance of all those involved. In other words, the people are the ultimate depositary of political authority.

The liberal contribution defines the basic unit for any given political system: the individual. The liberal individuals are equal among them and they are all free; they all posses a domain in which no one but him or herself can decide. The liberal individual is sovereign. No collective body can impose its will on the individual without its consent.

Of course, it still remains the question of which of the two components is predominant, in other words, are we talking of liberal democracy or democratic liberalism. The question is no futile, the fact that the two constituents appear so interlinked does not mean that they both have a long tradition independent form each other. There are advocates for any posture regarding this question; in general those who are more critic with liberal democracy tend to emphasize its liberal part, whereas we can find

great diversity within those who are in favor of liberal democracy. However, when talking of liberal democracy, it can be successfully reasoned that, at this point, the mix is more relevant than the constituent elements. Thus, we could agree on that liberalism has the greater share in all related to the definition of the state: nature, structure, basic units, etc. While democracy takes the lead regarding government: how to choose it, how to operate, who is to govern, etc. Then, deciding which of the two elements is predominant depends greatly on which theoretical standpoint you depart from; and even accepting that the specificity of liberal democracy is in greater measure result of its liberal part than of its democratic one, we cannot ignore that democracy has also altered liberalism during its joint time.

The major achievement of liberalism has been shaping the democratic impulse to fit its own design. Liberalism needed democracy if it wanted to truly implement a system in which the individual could keep its sovereignty; but at the same time democracy could ultimately negate this individual sovereignty, for liberals feared deeply the "tyranny of the masses". The solution liberalism founded was to interpose representatives between the people and the government, representative democracy was born [6]. But, on the other side we can also say that the democratic tide has been powerful: the suffrage is now universal, and apart from the traditional liberal rights (now so intermesh with democracy that we could not understand democracy without them), social rights have been added to the blend in many liberal democracies.

The combination of both elements has affected each of them in a way that is difficult to think of them isolatedly. Liberal democracy has set the standard for other democracies, the core of rights that we associate with democracy are, most of them, liberal. For liberalism the change has not been less deep, right now it demands quite some intellectual effort to think of liberalism without a democratic vessel. In this sense, there is no

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[6] Although it has been contested that, in purity, we should speak of representative government instead of representative democracy, see for instance: *The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy* by Bhikhu Parekh; in "Prospects for Democracy", edited by David Held.

doubt that their combination has been very successful; but we can still wonder about their future evolution.

In this block the authors that can make useful contributions are legion, to name a few Rawls, Beetham, Hayek, Held, Requejo, Walzer, Holden, Parekh, Philips, and surely many more will be reviewed.

Time conception

Defining the temporal conception embedded in liberal democracy may prove to be more of a challenge. Delimiting the time conception attached to liberalism may be quite simple, to demonstrate that this time conception is embedded in liberal democracy and affect it will surely be a more controversial part. Liberal democracy temporal conception is formed of two major contributions.

The first one is general to all Western theoretical constructions; Western time is linear and based on solar cycles. The linearity of Western lies in the fact that every event happens only once in time. everything was or is future (still to happen); was, is or will be present (happening now); and is or will be past (already happened). These situations cannot be interchanged. This is the logic of time and time does not repeat itself. The Solar aspects of Western time conception indicate two things: the first one, the desire to subsume time under a patriarchal model, the Sun has traditionally been considered a symbol of masculinity, whereas the Moon has been the one of feminine; thus we have to consider here that the use of a patriarchal model has to do with the association of man with all the higher human activities or attributes. The second one, tells us about the intention to tame time, to make it fit inside a neat calendar and/or watch, with clear and uniform subdivisions to make time a commodity that you can carry in your wrist or in your wallet/agenda; of course, the notion that the Sun is a much more reliable reference to measure time than the Moon is also culturally/gendered biased. But in any case it is not by serendipity that the item we use to measure time -the watch- is a metaphor of the Sun. The need for uniform patterns of time, that in turn could be divided into precise fractions, again uniform and interchangeable, and make time something objective that could be measured, classified and even stored.

The second one, Newtonian physics, is the result of the wave that was shaking the XVIIC. Europe, a new conception that offered a neat and sensible comprehension of the world, a world that in the new view was mechanical with components that act according to fixed laws, in the Newtonian world is based on certainty, order, structure, status and determinism; which make it predictable. The social translation of Newton physics principles according to Martin Landau are:

1. *Social processes are seen as determined processes, directed into given paths by the action of impersonal external forces.*
2. *The motion (behavior) of bodies (human) are pre-set and controlled according to the laws of nature.*
3. *Natural man, whose properties include natural rights was directed by natural forces to form societies.*
4. *A society is no more tan a sum of its discrete parts, its elemental bodies.*
5. *Social and political processes result from the action of the separate parts on one another.*
6. *The perfect working of a state, as a machine, depends only on the perfection of adjustment of the pushes and pulls of its constituent elements.*

Benjamin Barber has also argumented how Newtonian physics are heavily embedded in liberal democracy in the sense of that its world view is theoretically pregiven. According to him the major axiom of liberalism is that *humans are material beings and are ruled by laws equivalent to those of physical mechanics.* This axiom has some corollaries: *Atomism,* which is translated in politics as individualism, one of the founding stones of liberalism; *indivisibility,* which is interpreted as the rationality that leads human preferences and actions, humans are -by definition- rational and predictable; *commensurability,* which means that humans are all equal, and that the laws of human behavior are the same for all humans; *mutual exclusivity,* humans like particles cannot occupy the same space at the same time, thus private property regulates the access to the space; *sensationalism,* all human behavior is the result from a physical sensation, thus any kind of behavior can be deducted from a careful observation.

The combination of both contribution leaves with a first picture of liberal democracy temporal conception:

- A conception that it is linear and solar in its structure, but that it is set in motion by causal mechanisms, events are caused by other events, which in turn were caused by others. This temporal succession can be explained by a careful observation, which will allow us to formulate laws of general application and, eventually, make predictions.

A first analysis of the results of this time conception on liberal democracy offers several lines to develop:

- The importance that terms have in liberal democracy, specially in relation to mandates and offices. It is very specific of liberalism the concern to regulate strictly the duration of power exercise. In a certain way, we could already venture that liberal democracy abhors unlimited terms.

- These terms depend upon specific measurements of time; measurements that are uniform and interchangeable, and so are the terms.

- The causal rationale of the procedures in liberal democracy: the government derives its power from the parliament, which derives its attributions from the people; which may exercise its faculties because of their core of inalienable rights, and so on. This not only reflects the causal chain, but a temporal sequence that must be followed in the proper way, that is why legitimation can go in one direction, but not the other way round.

- Moreover, the irreversibility of processes, the pass from the state of nature to civilized societies cannot be inverted. The state of nature is the past of humanity and we cannot go back to it.

- It is also worth of research the connection between the solar aspects of liberal temporality, and the poor score liberal democracy has in terms of women's situation. Of course, the solar temporality and the patriarchal design of liberal democracy could be aspects of another of cultural pregiven apart from the temporal conception.

Comparison

This block function is to serve as an additional support to the previous one. Since the notion that a political system can be determined by its time conception it is likely that will cause some perplexity. And even if the case for liberal democracy could be reasonably argumented, it remains the question of the last hypothesis; this block is the one in which we will attempt to test it. To do it this block will engage in an unusual use of comparative politics since we will be comparing aspects or objects which have not received a lot of attention before. Comparing political systems in terms of their respective temporal conceptionss have been hardly attempted. That is why the main approaches used in this disciplined will not always suit the purposes of this research and we will have to let in methodologies borrowed from political anthropology or even anthropology itself. In any case the purpose of this comparison is to provide enough evidence that all political systems do have a time conception embedded in.

However, the use of the traditional methodologies of comparative politics pose further challenges. The first one has to do with the own shortcomings of this field which has been heavily burdened with western categories until recently, as it proves the insistence for decade to compare political systems in terms institutional structure. Fortunately there are other traditions within the field focused in the decision making processes or the articulation of power that may fit more neatly with the approach of this research. Nevertheless there will be another discipline that will take an important role in this block: political anthropology. Probably the trickiest part in this block will be to find the way to combine both fields to obtain the knowledge we seek.

The other political systems will be from very diverse cultural contexts. The intention of this research is to compare liberal democracy with an Islamic political system, a Confucian one and the Australian Aborigine one. The pick of these systems is not to add an exotic touch to the study, but for very specific reasons. First, none of these systems is connected to the Western cultural context; second, all of them come from traditions with very diverse temporal conceptionss. The objective of this block will be to identify these dissimilar time conception and then try to verify the

hypothesis in their respective political systems. Hopefully, at the end of this block we will have a better understanding of the relation of a political system and its temporal conception and we will be in disposition to achieve the objective of this research.

<u>Futures Studies</u>

This will be the last block of the dissertation. At this point we will have accumulated a better knowledge of the role time conception plays in liberal democracy, and in doing so we will be in a good position to extent our research to the future. From this moment on Futures studies will clearly take the lead.

Futures studies have been intensively interested in everything related to the future of democracy (in any of its conceptions) and it should come to no surprise the abundant literature it can supply; there are extensive analysis of the challenges democracy will face, of alternative political systems for the future. There is also lots of data about social change, new technologies, demographic studies, trends analysis and environmental scans that may help to furnish any kind of future scenario we may need. All this will be useful in higher or lesser degree. Again though, let it be said that the objective of this research is not so much to forecast how may liberal democracy actually change or evolve, but to ascertain how these shifting circumstances will affect to the temporal conception embedded in liberal democracy. Ultimately the goal of this dissertation is to try to determine how liberal democracy's time conception will react to the foreseeable changes in the future. Will it resist the changes? Will it allow liberal democracy to evolve smoothly? Or will we be facing a situation of redefinition of democracy underpinnings? Will liberal democracy remain liberal? and democratic? Some of these queries have been asked with different questions but their answers will serve this research; in other cases we will have to venture our own response. In any instance, the conclusions of this dissertation may help to have a greater understanding of liberal democracy internal processes of adaptation, and in doing so, give some clues for its future evolution.

The process of this block will be the analysis of two big trends, that will be considered two major challenges for the future of liberal democracy. The

interaction of these two challenges with liberal democracy and the different outcomes it may result in may provide enough information to design alternative scenarios for the future of liberal democracy.

The first challenge is the most obvious, and includes several aspects that could be treated separately but that could also be considered just parts of the same phenomenon, the Exhaustion of the Progress Paradigm, the end of the industrial society, the conclusion of the Second Wave, pick your choice. This phenomenon has several aspects, to name a few: rampant population, economic recession, environmental degradation, resources depletion, social turbulences, political instability, religious and social fundamentalism, values crises, increase of criticism, emergence of alternatives, etc. Just a swallow examination of them shows that they are deeply interrelated. They can be considered effects of the final moments of a paradigm, a model, that is almost exhausted but it is still resisting to the new ones to take its place.

As it has been said this is a phenomenon widely and extensively explored in futures studies. What here is called the exhaustion of the progress paradigm has received a variety of names in the field, so far: *The Great Transition* (Boulding), *Humanity at the Crossroad* (Mesarovic), *The Planet at the Crossroad* (Leger), *The Last Age of Capital* (Wager), *The End of History* (Fukuyama), *The End of Nature* (McKibben), and several more. However, probably the most comprehensive study on this issue is Alvin Toffler's Third Way; where he describes the end of *Indusreality* and the coming of the next big wave, the third wave. Toffler's new wave was also received many names, thus we can find: *The Third transition* (Boulding), *The Next Boom* (Kahn), *The First Global Revolution* (King), *The Ecology Revolution* (Brown), *Post-Industrial Society* (Bell), *Post-Capitalism Society* (Drucker), *Post-Modern Age* (Etzioni) *Post-Scarcity Society* (Bookchin), *Information Society* (Masuda), *Post-Information Society* (Malaska). If nothing else, there is plenty of names to choose.

As I said Toffler is probably who has done the most extensive and systematic study of this. According to him, the Indusreality is *the culminating group of ideas and presumptions with which the children of industrialism were taught to understand their world. (...) A powerful and coherent conception of the world.* The indusreality has a three

fundamental concepts: the *war against nature, the importance of evolution* and *the principle of progress* (the idea that history is moving irreversibly towards a better life for humanity). The time conception of Indusreality, always following Toffler, is based on sincronicity, uniformization, and linearity.

This situation of transitional instability has also consequences in the political arena. Thus we can see the erosion that the institution of the state is suffering everywhere. It still is the maximum political instance around, the state is what gives a nation, territory or ethnicity international recognition, and the opportunity to rule its own destiny, as the burst of new states in East Europe can prove. But at the same time we are witnessing the emergence of international instances that are depriving states of some of their historical prerogatives, not only that, but also elsewhere we are seeing movements to limit the state power at the local level: autonomies, confederations, claims to sovereignty, etc. All this instances thriving for more self-rule presents us a world where interdependence will take more and more power from the state, ultimately this paradox shows that new formulations are called for, and new political articulations will have to be design sooner or later.

The second challenge is brought by all the developments in Communication Technologies. We are moving from a printed world "The Gutenberg Galaxy" to quote McLuhan to a cybernetic-digital world which opens up new possibilities and realities to what we are still largely unprepared for.

One example of this can be found in law. *Today, our legal consciousness is still demarcated and mediated by printed texts. (...) the law's primary instrument remains the printed document. Wherever we turn, legal reality is shaped largely by the printed world* [7]. And at the same time we are beginning to experience the shift to new kinds of law more fluid and more sensitive to the particularities of every case. We are also starting to interact with sophisticated programs that allow ordinary people to obtain the legal information they need without any previous knowledge on the

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[7] Ronald K. L. Collins and David M. Skover, "Paratexts", Stanford Law Review num. 44, 1992.

matter and that create a whole new relationship with law that of through lawyers and printed text [8]. Not only that, but the same process to prepare a law can radically changed by putting the text on line and allowing people to interact with it. The system of court revision, imagine that in controversial decisions, judges could seek the advise of the colleagues, or other people, by putting the whole question on line. In all those cases what we begin to see is that law is shifting from rules firmly fixed by printed text, to a situation in which law becomes digitally adaptable, evolving and fluid.

A second example is how all this evolution is problematizing our spatial references. The new communication technologies are so potent that they can simply ignore most of our previous spatial boundaries; thus next to the traditional spatial criteria for grouping (local, national, regional, global) we see the burst of affinity groups that bloom everywhere boosted by these new technologies. The possibility to detach ourselves from spatial circumscriptions is such that we can even begin to talk about non-spatial governments. As defined by Tonn and Feldman: *The defining characteristic of an non-spatial government (NSG) is the willingness of a group of people that share a common bond to engage in collective activities that traditionally fall under the rubric of government. As suggested by the term "inhabitants" of an NSG need not live within explicitly defined geographical areas that necessarily elude other governments. In a non-spatial world, NGS's might often overlap geographically in numerous, highly complex ways.* This is a radical and revolutionary concept for the traditional notion of governments and governance, and it is a possibility that could be very appealing for big segments of population.

And there are also all the new possibilities for assembling, participating, and voting these technologies offer. For instance, it could be design a network to allow electronic, decentralized vote. Every citizen could vote from home on a daily basis and all kinds of issues would be open to public consultation. Such a case would suppose a radical depart from

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[8] There are several examples of this like Lexis, Westlaw and Dialog, which can be accessed through the World Wide Web. Westlaw, can even by consulted by voice asking questions in ordinary English, which makes it even more accessible.

what we consider democracy today, to begin with it would reduce, if not eliminate, the need for representatives; also it would reduce greatly the role of circumscriptions as there would no logistic reasons to divide any territory into smaller pieces; finally, the need for terms would have to be redefined, without representatives and with the possibility of frequent consultation there won't be such a need for fixed terms, except for certain offices maybe. All this without considering which could be the impact in other institutions like political parties, opinion/pressure groups, media, social movements, etc. all of which have an important effect on how democracy functions.

All these possibilities do pose new questions that will have to be answered at many levels. For instance, how all this will affect concepts like nation, community (and the sense of belonging to one), social interrelations, participation, and many others. For what it matters to the temporal conception, we see that these development do affect some of the aspects of present time:

First, it destroys the possibility of neat chronologies, the acceleration in the production, processing, storage and transformation of information is so high that the perception is as everything would happen simultaneously; the beginning and the end cease to be so important but all the interaction in between. Second, it eliminates the need for uniformity and sincronicity since the notion of real time has ultimately no meaning in cyberspace, allowing for a new world that can be diverse and asincronic. We can conclude that these technologies bring the possibility of a new time conception based on diversity, asincronicity and fluidity.

The combination of both challenges has, in its most extreme cases, the potential to create a new world, based on new premises, very contradictory with our present reality. It is highly unprobable that liberal democracy would remain unscatered and unaltered through all theses changes. Not only that, but, as we have already seen, some of the previous developments affect the core of cultural pregivens of liberal democracy, some of them could particularly traumatic for the present time conception. All together makes us to think that liberal democracy will undergo deep transformations.

5. Methodology

From a methodological point of view three blocks concentrate the greater interest: the temporal conception, the comparison and the futures studies blocks. The first block, definition, will rely on the tradition bibliographical revision, and deserves no further comment in this point.

Time conception

Since the information we will be looking for in this block is distributed in several fields it will be necessary to keep a transdisciplinar attitude to review several disciplines (philosophy, anthropology, and political theory itself among others). However, there is no guaranty that even searching through all these fields we will find what we need. In such a circumstance, we may resort to methodologies developed by post-modern philosophy. Specifically we may use genealogy and deconstruction. Both methods aim to uncover what remains implicit o hidden, either seeking it concrete historic origin and circumstance (genealogy)or by engaging in a deep analysis of whom benefits a given, theory, situation or status quo (deconstruction).

Comparison

The comparison block present the already mentioned difficulty that, within the traditional approaches of comparative politics, no one is focused in the object of this particular research: temporal conceptionss. Thus a quick review of the main methodological options in comparative politics confirms this initial fear. The legal-institutional approach, the one with a greater tradition, and the first one to be specifically designed by the early politologists, is so heavily focused on the analysis of institutions that becomes highly ineffective when looking anything else apart form institutions, which is precisely why it is less useful for non-Western political systems; in this case, this methodology could useful once we have pinpoint the political articulations of the different time conceptions,

not the other way round, for this reason it won't be the first methodological choice. As a modernization of this first approach we can find the structural-functional analysis, which has become quite predominant nowadays, it is based on the premise that any political system has to perform a range of basic functions, focusing on the functions allows the researcher to compare very diverse structures regardless of the institutional design they might have; again, it seems a promising course of action, but in a second stage of the comparison. A very different standpoint takes the approach that focuses on the decision making process, understood as the most universal political activity; the whole focus here is to study who takes decisions, through which processes, using what kind of institution, how they are implemented and how decisions evolved; once more, the focus of research of this methodology is, at the best, coincidental with our object of interest; however, the way decisions are taken in a given political system can be very revealing of how its time conception operates, we could say that it is a good trace of what we are looking for; this is why it may be worth to review the work of authors like Macridis or Synder. Finally, there is a long tradition of comparing political system using the power approach, as a matter of fact, it is the one with longer history, and between his practitioners we could find authors who work long before political science was recognized as such, thus Aristotle, Maquiavelli, but also Ibn Khaldun, and Ssu-Ma Chien, and later on Hobbes or even Weber, have contributed to this approach; in a sense this approach is highly complementary of the first one, of course, power as a object of research becomes difficult to define neatly and even harder to elaborate empirically; as a general approach it will be generally avoided in this research; mostly, it offers little to gain and presents clear dangers of dispersion, at the same time it is precisely the dispersion of the works in this approach what may offer certain pieces of real interest for this dissertation, for instance the work of Khaldun or Chien.

In any case, it must be clear that no methodology is of direct application and an effort of analogy will be needed in this block. But another discipline will help to fit the pieces into each other, anthropology and particularly political anthropology. Political anthropology is the other field that will provide the remaining fragments to complete the work in this

block. Although, again, some additional work will be needed; most of the comparative work done in this field has been with an evolutionary or developmental perspective. Thus we find all sorts of classifications that describe the evolution from the most simple political structure in a nomad band until the sophisticated forms of the industrial states, in the middle we find intermediate stages as tribes, chiefdoms, pre industrial states, and so on; classification that does not fit completely with the object of this research, but that may offer additional information.

As a result of all this it is quite obvious that whichever is the final methodological option it will have to mix some of the aforementioned alternatives. Unfortunately, at this stage of the research it is still unclear in which doses will these elements be combined.

Futures studies

The futures part will deal with a variety of methodologies, but for different reasons that in the preceding point. In the former case we have been forced to resort to several methodologies, even from different branches, because none of them could be directly used for our purposes and we had to take pieces of information from all of them; whereas now we have several methodologies to fulfill our objective, and the cause to use some of them is simply to enrich our analysis. As it has already been said the procedure for this block will be in several steps: initially we will define the two challenges, secondly we will try to see how these challenges will affect liberal democracy and finally we will develop some of the resulting possibilities into future scenarios.

To define the two challenges we will make use of the extensive data available to characterize them into one or several trends each. These trends will be extrapolated afterwards resulting in the "tendency" hypothesis; using environmental scanning and emerging issues analysis, we will have possible event to impact the "tendency" hypothesis resulting into some alternative ones. Luckily for us a great deal of this endeavor has been already done which simplifies this step.

In order to identify the possible consequences of these challenges on liberal democracy we will use a cross impact analysis. Since this research has no intention to build and run a model on the future of democracy, we

won't choose a formalized analysis, for our objectives a qualitative version will be enough.

The final step of the futures studies block will be the elaboration of some future scenarios. The number of scenarios is not determined by now since it depends greatly on the results of the cross impact analysis; hopefully some of the resulting possibilities would fall into similar conditions making it easier to define the scenarios. Wouldn't it be the case then this dissertation will opt for defining the scenarios that show the greater variation. Each scenario will be build following a starting hypothesis, all the scenarios will try to be as complete as possible; as always in these cases the golden rule will be coherence and consistency.

5. Resources

This dissertation does not demand any use of a special resource. Most of the information needed will come from books, articles, papers and other sorts of bibliographical sort; in order to keep with the flow of times and the spirit of this study internet and electronic mail will also serve as the source for other pieces of information. Apart from this, the research will keep a low technological profile; particularly since it is unlikely that we will run a computer model to test the future hypothesis.

6. Working schedule

The time needed to complete this dissertation depends a lot on the dedication the author could devote to it. For several circumstances, that it is not the place to talk about but that are related to the economy, it is highly unlikely to think about full time dedication, at least in the near future. Hoping that the research could be combined with a compatible work, a reasonable time span could be two years.

This duration could be shorter, but other considerations force us to be prudent. On the first place there is the fact that some blocks of the dissertation will need a lot of preparatory work; for instance, the parts in which the temporal conception will have to be explicitly defined, but particularly all the block of comparison between political systems based on different time conceptions. In this two parts, it is almost a wild guess to say, at this stage, how long they will take.

However, there is a possibility we have to take into account. If further research proves that the focus of the comparison is not feasible, then we can either reduce the number of systems being compared or eliminate the whole block of comparison. The comparison results are not essential for the core of this study, and it can be postponed for a later research completely focused on this aspect.

7. Bibliography

The following bibliography is just the result of a first collecting effort of sources for the research, and it has not been completely review yet. The classification in different categories responds to the logic of the blocks, and there are works that could be placed in more of one category. The comparison literature has been specially difficult to find, in Catalonia there is not a lot of literature about non-Western political systems, and my picks present additional problems, finally I solved the problem asking experts on these field to advise me some introductory works that could guide me later on. Unfortunately, these books are not available in any of the local libraries. The futures-studies literature is another of the significant holes in our libraries, however, in this case more than ten years working in the field makes up for this.

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