

## ***TO COMMUNICATE IN EUROPE***

**by Alessandro Figus**

The expansion of information is then one of the most significant, formative factors for the future of our society. It is very important examines the implications of information and information technologies for the future European political and social dynamics.

In Europe the political and social potentialities of new way of communication and of information strategy are discussed in particular it has increased its persuasive powers in a variety of social, scholarly, scientific, and political circles. Suddenly we are introduced with such concepts as contentions, express the idea that information will assume a governing economic and social role in European society and that new patterns of facts usage will engender a new variety of politics, have assumed a revitalised credibility in an period characterised by an information characterised by a development of information technologies.

The editions of the volume of printed “information inflation” occurred in 1750 (first edition) and with the other editions (second in 1900, the third in 1950, and the fourth in 1960) explains well that the information is not the same that the knowledge. Using “cybernetist” Stafford Beer’s definition, knowledge, or information, is what changes us<sup>1</sup>. This criterion distinguishes knowledge from information , which merely inundate us; the information can not change us because they are too many, too disparate, and too useless for us to comprehend, experience, and learn. Thus, knowledge ultimately is defined by how the organism (in particular the reader, decision maker, editor, whatever) reacts-or if it reacts-to positive stimuli (information, etc.). So in this case we can say that information is in the role of stimuli for the knowledge.

The technology has enabled the society to convert information into knowledge on an increasingly wide scale. Computers, instructional technology, micro-technology, cable and satellite television and Internet, especially have been instrumental in these conversions. They not only enable the society to manage with the information explosion by transforming

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<sup>1</sup> Beer S., *Cybernetics and Management*, The English Universities Press, Limited, London, 1959.

information into knowledge, but they may permit to the person to expand his biological *cerebrum* via technological extensions.

The new information technologies evolve into combined information/communications systems and networks, the society not only will provide himself with a technological memory but may also be able to use information more readily and considerably than ever before, thus becoming more really knowledgeable, more really learned, and more socially informed for political and economical action.

At present a lot of information specialists, scientists, and technicians have spoken about the importance of an information utility and the defined home information terminal, today commonly called computer. Many specialists in the two decades ago predicted that the terminal will be the successor to television in terms of popularity and use. Connected by a superfluity of information utilities, which may be publicly or privately owned, home information terminals combine features of television, telephone, radio, micro-reproduction, and possibly photocopying technologies, but today the television is still the tool of mass communication.

Every members of the European Society are able to acquire information, entertainment, and education on demand from a variety of organisations and social institutions, such as libraries, schools, universities, laboratories, local cable television programmers and radio stations, the stock exchange, national television and radio networks, and from friends and business links. Moreover, the persons have a communications capacity with those institutions tied-in with the utility, and thus are able to select that knowledge or entertainment he desired; he could, in short, self-edit, and it is also a cultural problem and not only of our time. To communicate is always a dilemma of people and it go beyond the culture<sup>2</sup>.

For political evolution we have potentialities and these are inherent to the notion of an information utility. One danger is that information networks ultimately could provide a highly usable means of manipulating significant segments of society, if not society as a whole. Data networks can be set up in such a way so that each citizen with an information terminal in his home can encode his "information profile" on the memory banks of a central computer. Information and communication system in Europe is performing for the individual citizen

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<sup>2</sup> See Hall E. T. *Beyond Culture*, Anchor Press, New York, 1976.

(learning, banking, etc.) and for the corporation and local and European government (advertising, teaching, market researching, opinion polling-conceivably direct surveillance and bugging, etc.), extremely detailed information on every citizen could be recorded and stored.

The dangers of information network operators misusing this power have been hinted as a tempting commercial and political appeals, each one tailored to the individual respondent and delivered to him electronically in his home. But this precarious side of information expansion can be compact using a lot of different analysis of the same argument information. It is imaginable that televised and internet broadcasters might be related to individual information terminal users on the basis of compatibility, thus further attractive the client appeal modified by network operators, as could happen in the case that we were in front of an authoritarian personality might find himself conversing electronically with an announcer whose hortatory style is reminiscent of Benito Mussolini, as well some dictators of our time.

The politics image and politics communications is developed from juvenile stage around the years 1960 till present, competitive and aggressive information networks predicated on the feedback principle. Of course, the potential benefits of information technology at least equal in magnitude the potential dangers.

Most notably, with a fully-developed information network the European student becomes his own teacher; he chooses that which he is most inclined to learn, and at his own pace without dysfunctional competitive pressure. This is an ability that can be granted only by technology in a technological society. Yet, paradoxically, it is also to look for a return to the medieval practice of custom-tailored publishing. Will be possible to use the power of computers to carry out an editing process on behalf of the only editor who any costumer himself.

It is clear that actually the potential ability to be one's own editor and teacher may be subject to at least one qualification. The individual client at the home information terminal of his computer must choose what he wants to read, see, and hear according to descriptors that are codified by those controlling the information network. The liability for defining descriptors and determining is under the potent censor power of the network controller.

The information can be effectively to be unknown in the system, and those who cover it are extremely well protected from accountability for their actions. For example in Italy, as well in the other European countries, the network controller decide to categories the hypothetical fact of excessive corporate profits for the political skill defined as informational expertise rather than

as electoral experience. There is a particular political relation of information networks is their implication for social decision making. The networks increase or diminish democratic participation in the public policy-making process.

It is interesting to remark that, with the advent of information utilities, voters participate more frequently and more directly, and that individualised citizen contacts with public policy makers will increase thanks to the use of the most modern technologies of the information. Technologies introduce the concepts of “global village”, and for example it is possible to imagine in the future new procedure to vote. Important is to use the communication and information. Today only voter registration procedures and requirements remain among the greatest obstacles to voting at home, with full participation. A home-based information utility, in which everyone could register his opinion on issues with maximal convenience, probably would have substantial effects on voter participation.

To continue this idea, it is clear that for a full participation, in a “participative society”<sup>3</sup>, with the full information utility, the citizen could discover what agency was responsible for what policy that affected him with particular grievances could be registered and handled much more quickly than they are presently, thus increasing the responsiveness of the politics forms to the problem of the individual citizen. The individual citizens having genuine personal access to policy-makers as a result of a persistent information utility, we can foresee the “debureaucratisation”.

It is evident how much the relationship is significant among communication and participation. In particular the problem about the “Voter Participation”. It is known that voting in elections is the basis of democracy and citizenship. Turnout at elections in Europe giving the government and local authorities cause for concern. Elections are frequently held in either Spring or Autumn. If the weather is bad, voters are less inclined to vote (from this at times the victory of one or other political block it depends). In Winter is usually avoided and also the Summer as many people are generally on holiday and cannot be disturbed to organise a postal vote<sup>4</sup>.

In recent years turnout has continued to fall and at the general election vote. The implications of a low turnout are that those who are elected are not representative of the

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<sup>3</sup> See Zampetti P.L., *La società partecipativa*, Dino Editore, Roma, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> See Rush M., *Politica e società*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1998.

majority of electors. There is a theory that when things are going reasonably well many people don't worry to vote. National records show that in years when there are contentious issues, locally or nationally, then participation in elections increases.

In England a famous posters issued by the Home Office have the slogan "No Vote – No Voice". The message being if you do not exercise your right to vote you have forfeited your right to pronounce who should govern us, nationally and locally and cannot reasonably complain if you diverge with their policies. Democracy is taken very much for granted in the several countries and there are no better examples of what it means to be able to choose your government than the long lines of people queuing up to vote at elections in newly born democracies. In England there is another slogan which says "Use it or Lose it". This slogan are used to communicate to the English citizen, that is why it is possible to talk of relation between communication and participation. In this case the lobbyists use the information system to communicate with the people.

Votes are the legislator's money, and money is only an indirect way of buying votes via expensive campaigns. With the directly participatory democracy enabled by information technology, the influence of organised interest groups, which is based on ready campaign contributions and carefully cultivated access to policy makers, could be undermined radically. We also can expect the problem around the interest groups as a result of the impact of the information utility. Because the costs of obtaining access to policy makers would be reduced by the information utility, interested citizens could coalesce around highly particularistic demands with considerable economy. Such an eventuality ultimately could have ramifications for the bipolar system in Italy or in the large part of Europe (as well the two party system of United States).

The question is really complicate and no exist only the relationship between participation of electoral competition and communication. Some specialist affirm that there are many reasons why electoral participation has declined, but one of them surely is that citizens in too many places now have no real chance to influence the outcome and there is a darker side to the politics of an information utility, however, and one that unfortunately seems to be a more plausible outcome: that information technology may increase and will perhaps increase the isolation of public policy makers from the common people.

After analysing the television viewing practice of various social, educational, and economic in Europe, some political scientist observed a positive correlation between hours of home viewing and rates of political participation. The more interested and informed citizen could reduce the overall quality of participation by levelling the differences of rates in political activity among those who vary in interest and information.

The question moves around the theme communication, information and a technological means, to the service of these. In the case of the elections the television means play a fundamental role for the skill of the objectives. They enter game during political campaigns. Much of the cost of campaigns is directed toward television and radio advertising. In a close election, the outcome is repeatedly decided by the candidate who is able to acquire the greatest number of media spot. A critical minority of voters are influenced by the content of these spot and vote consequently. The major role in elections played by expensive television advertising is believed by many to deform and depreciate the political discourse. Political candidates are sold by the advertising business using the same techniques for selling products. Generally, the content of the advertising is short on discussion of political topics and directed instead toward emotional appeals recognized through careful research polling techniques.

However the television and an all more modern means of communication are not only used by the political class, but also and especially in the economic area. In short, in our time, all use the technology to communicate.

The change of the economic and social scenes has totally transformed the organizational and managerial systems. The convergence, to leave from years ninety, between the Information Technology and the Telecommunications system. The creation of internet and its development stays between the elements that have expressively modified the way to look problematic managerial are old that new.

It is evident that Internet and the television have in common the use of the technology to let the people to communicate. To communicate and to inform, to communicate and to recognize. The obscurity of Internet is as and thing to communicate, and who uses (and to what purpose) the computer means and the technologies more developed. The great difference between the television and Internet is in the type of communication. The television is a instrument that serves for public communicating, internet is a instrument that serves for public or private communicating, but also in anonymous way. In this case Internet offers new

opportunities for anonymous and pseudonymous communication that the television cannot offer. The risk of anonymity can also facilitate socially unacceptable or criminal activities because of the difficulty in holding anonymous users accountable<sup>5</sup>.

Internet has radically changed the way to communicate of the people in all part of the world and it has been around for much longer than most people think, with its roots able to be traced back to the 1960s, till 2004, when the company Google launched the stock market. The clear goals have driven some, whilst others have become household names almost by accident, Internet it is a phenomenon that has changed communication to an extent which was previously totally unimaginable.

Television and Internet are not in competition yet<sup>6</sup>. One completes the other. For example as it regards the political matter it is the television the tool that (especially in Europe, in America is different) it influences the public opinion, and not Internet<sup>7</sup>. For example it is easy to be able to say that Internet doesn't influence the share to the vote while the television could do it.

In comparison to the television Internet certainly has more acts based on the personal communication. But the use of Internet is in incessant developing. Internet is tied more and more to the economy, while the television lives the relationship with the economy through the publicity. To gain an idea of Internet applications used, the companies were asked about their actual and future plans to conduct business via Internet and the use of Internet in economy. It depends in the future from impact of new communication technologies.

The future development of Internet-based economics and especially its influence on logistics processes and markets. It is essential to understand importance of Internet based processes in economy. It is evident that Europe is in the middle of an e-business revolution driven by information and communication technologies (ICT). Traditional roles of intermediaries are evolving, and so are the relationships between suppliers, customers, and competitors. Policy makers and entrepreneurs must respond to these challenges. That is why understanding and preparing for the e-economy is at the heart of European policy. This means

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<sup>5</sup> Giannantonio V., *Manuale di diritto dell'informatica*, Vol. 1: La libertà informatica. I beni informatici, Cedam, Padova, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> See Ardizzone P., *Televisione e processi formativi*, Unicopli, Milano, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> See Crespellani C., Porcella S., Tagliagambe G., Usai, *La comunicazione nell'era di Internet*, Etaslibri, Milano, 2000.

airing fundamental questions, involving stakeholders in wide-ranging discussions and developing policies based on careful analysis<sup>8</sup>.

Today the television and the Internet system, put in evidence the chaotic transition period to a new age defined by global competition, rampant change, faster flow of information and communication, increasing business complexity, and pervasive globalization. The pace of change has become so rapid that it took a different type of firms to be dominated and marked entirely new era of business. This new environment is also characterized by technological advances, and a consumer who has adjusted to this quicker pace and whose fickle preferences are revised with the speed of a television commercial.

In all part of the world the economy and the market change. A lot of companies have modified the processes operated under the push of the market and its relationship with the management of the communication.

In Europe, pursuing the objective to shorten the times of refuelling, the logical new of the production processes melt on one review in the entire chain of business through the control of the entire process: from the suppliers to the customers. It changes deeply the management optical: the effectiveness of the entire production process, becomes more important of the effectiveness of the single department. The natural reaction is the tendency to the coordination of the production process through one more penetrating managerial integration and operating, eliminating, for how much possible one, the barriers between partner trade them. The happened one of an enterprise in a market is, therefore, more and more conditioned from the competitiveness of the chain of the value in which it is position, using the communication to modify the equilibriums of the market.

In other words, for how much an enterprise is efficient and effective in pursuing it objects to it of market and how much company use the communication system to improve its development. It could find in series difficulty to you if to mount must interact with inefficient, far subjects from the real requirements of market, importing inefficiencies and inability.

Therefore to manage the entire chain of the value of the company begins to become a true one and own necessity sets up also from a global market, in which the competition it grows in every field and where the happened one depends also on the ability to manage the entire chain

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<sup>8</sup> See *Enterprise Europe Online* on the website <http://europa.eu.int/>

of supply, production and commercialization. With the concept of supply chain management, this phenomenon is wanted to be identified just<sup>9</sup>.

The economy, or the world of the business, then uses the communication and the most sophisticated technologies to inform the consumer to reach the client. In this case the communication is reduced to a simple operation of sale. However the communication is not to confuse with the persuasion<sup>10</sup> and with all the derived techniques however, this is psychology and not information.

What could be an utopia, is today reality. Utopia, that is, the use of knowledge to eliminate want and assure survival. The technological society could be the only society possible in the technological earth of the future. The politics of knowledge may be the politics of necessity in a society more interconnected and complex than thin to today, everybody have for a long time imagined.

The information society rides the technology, it uses to transform the uses and the customs of the people. Information is becoming readily available around the globe at an unprecedented pace. Customers, competitors, and innovators have instant access to each other<sup>11</sup>. Technological change, especially change in information and communication technology, delivered the Information Age and converted it to the Knowledge Age.

Is it possible to imagine the future ? As the global village gets more integrated, individuals in a networked world are going to expect instant communication and receive it. The future will be for example the use of “Instant messaging technologies”<sup>12</sup> that are practically free and provide instantaneous communication between the people in every part of the world. They are poised to provide connectivity in a networked world. Do you imagine this ? When this technology is available, companies will be able to set up video conference calls without all the costs and equipment required today. It will be a complete equality.

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<sup>9</sup> See Calvelli A., *Scelte d'impresa e mercati internazionali*, Giappichelli Editore, Torino, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> See Cialdini R., *The psychology of persuasion*, Quill William Morrow and Company, New York, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> See Boschi S., *Il potere del Cambiamento*, Vertici Edizioni, Firenze, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Heilig J. M., *Virtual reference at Jones University*. Colorado Libraries, Colorado, 2001.

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