Communication, Solidarity, and Cooperation in the Digital Era

Comunicação, Solidariedade e Cooperação na Era Digital

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The presented collaborative work encompasses various pivotal ideas driven by the research team of the *Digicom2030*[1] project, which has included contributions from a diverse array of experts from both Spanish and Latin American contexts. Among the principal ideas, there is one embracing what could be defined as a *sociocentric perspective* on technopolitical processes (Marí Sáez, 2004; McQuail, 1983/1991), whereby the focus of social intervention is on emancipatory social processes, within which the uses and appropriations of digital technologies are inserted. This sociocentric perspective distances itself from the *technocentric perspective*, which suggests from a technological determinism standpoint that technology is at the heart of the processes of social change. Technocentrism is as seductive as it is inoperative in achieving the objective of generating structural change processes and has been described, from complementary perspectives, by the term *technological solutionism* (Morozov, 2013).

As proposed in the subtitle of this work, the book contains three main sections. The first section develops the key theoretical framework for understanding digital solidarity communication, incorporating new contributions that have emerged in this field in recent years. The second section reflects on the methodologies that contribute (or not) to academic and citizen intervention for more rigorous social research that is more attentive to the innovations that come from the digital aspect. The last part of the book includes a section of case studies that address digital citizen practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the analysis of two non-governmental development organisations (NGOs) from a communicational perspective.

In more detail the book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter, "Comunicación, Redes Sociales y Emancipación Social en el Capitalismo Digital" (Communication, Social Networks, and Social Emancipation in Digital Capitalism; Víctor

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[1] *Digicom2030* is the acronym for the research project of the State Research Agency of Spain PID2019-106632GB-I00 entitled *Digital Solidarity Communication. Analysis of the Imaginaries, Discourses and Communicative Practices of NGOs in the Horizon of the 2030 Agenda.* For more information, please visit: https://digicom2030.uca.es/.

M. Marí Sáez), provides a global analysis of NGOs and their communicative practices, serving as an entryway to the entire work. This chapter begins by reviewing the diversity of theoretical approaches from which solidarity communication has been analysed in the Spanish context in recent years. It discusses labels such as "communication for solidarity and cooperation" (Erro Sala & Burgui, 2010), "empowerment and ecosocial communication" (Chaparro Escudero, 2009), or "transgressive communication for social change" (Nos Aldás et al., 2019). This plurality of labels has an ambivalent interpretation, as it indicates the richness of nuances in the field and certain epistemological weaknesses (Marí Sáez, 2021). The chapter reinterprets Spanish solidarity communication over the past 40 years to identify a dual reductionist tendency, even in the age of social media: an emphasis on a perspective of communication centred on the transmission of information and the predominance of the technocentric perspective mentioned earlier.

The second chapter, "Las Precarias Relaciones Entre Comunicación, Cooperación y Cultura. Una Mirada Panorámica Desde los Informes del Estado de la Cultura en España (2011-2021)" (The Precarious Relationships Between Communication, Cooperation and Culture. A Panoramic View From the State Reports of Culture in Spain [2011-2021]; Patricia Corredor Lanas), analyses, from a cultural perspective, the participation of civil society in the fields of communication and culture. The author concludes that a lost decade has passed regarding institutional and State support for cultural creation in Spain. The same can be said concerning gender equality in cultural matters, where significant glass ceilings still exist.

The third chapter, titled "Imaginarios Decoloniales de la Comunicación y Transiciones Ecosociales y Feministas en la Era Digital" (Decolonial Imaginaries of Communication and Ecosocial and Feminist Transitions in the Digital Age; Manuel Chaparro Escudero and Susana de Andrés del Campo), reflects on the anthropocentric, androcentric, and Eurocentric discourses of mass media from an alternative perspective. The authors propose other meanings of communication that favour an ecosocial and feminist transition. The chapter takes into account various tendencies that have gained importance in the field of alternative communication in recent years, such as degrowth approaches (Latouche, 2022) or the decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres & Cavooris, 2017).

The fourth chapter, entitled "*Coolture*, Periodismos Mutantes y Soberanía Comunicacional" (*Coolture*, Mutant Journalisms, and Communication Sovereignty; Omar Rincón), proposes a fusion of the digital, new ethics (*coolture*), the digital revolution, and a type of journalism (described as mutant) that is not limited to the logic of hegemonic media but rather aims at a communication that appeals to emotions, discourses, and popular interventions.

The fifth chapter, "¿Cómo Se Investigan, Desde la Academia, las Prácticas Comunicativas de las Oenegés? Tendencias y Confluencias en la Era Digital" (How Are NGOs' Communicative Practices Investigated From the Academy? Tendencies and Confluences in the Digital Age; Miguel Vicente Mariño and Eva Campos Domínguez), addresses, from the perspective of research methodologies, the tensions and challenges of digital solidarity communication in the face of current topical phenomena such as big

data. The authors acknowledge that research in the solidarity sector faces the challenge of incorporating new methodologies focused on analysing digital communication with greater intensity.

The sixth chapter, entitled "Análisis Crítico del Discurso Solidario y Marcos Gubernamentales. Estudio de Caso de Oxfam Intermón y de la Cruz Roja" (Critical Analysis of Solidarity Discourse and Government Frameworks. Case Study of Oxfam Intermón and Cruz Roja; Gérard Fernández Smith and Hanae Trola Skalli), analyses the messages of NGOs and their communication for development and social change. For this purpose, the authors implement a relevant methodology proposed by van Dijk (2003). Thus, the fieldwork allows for identifying solidarity discourses, ideological categories, and government frameworks of two of the most prominent and impactful NGOs at the national and international levels from a qualitative perspective.

The seventh and final chapter, titled "La Pandemia del Coronavirus en China y España y el Edu-Entretenimiento Como Estrategia Comunicativa Frente a la Desinformación" (The Coronavirus Pandemic in China and Spain and Edu-Entertainment as a Communication Strategy Against Misinformation; Yiheng Wang, Clara Martins do Nascimento, Víctor Mari, and José Berenguel Fernández), focuses on communicative initiatives from citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic through a case study. The analysis perspective is interesting insofar as it reveals how, in the first months of confinement (in 2020), the limits of institutional and governmental discourse to convey healthcare measures to the population were supplemented and completed by edu-communicative initiatives of healthcare launched by citizens created outside of any social organisation or public institution.

In each chapter and the book, the analyses are complemented by susceptible proposals for alternative action, which can be summarised into three points (pp. 24–30). Firstly, there is a necessity to think more and better about communicational critiques of digital capitalism by social organisations and academia. The frenetic activism, the prioritisation of the urgent over the important, or the excessive bureaucratisation are hindrances that restrain the construction of thought and action with sufficient transformative depth. Secondly, the excessive fragmentation of the *Ngo-isation of solidarity* (Álvarez, 2009; Petras, 1999) prevents the necessary and wanted social and political articulation of transformative action. Finally, in the face of the colonising advance of the commodification of communication, thinking of communication as a commons is an urgent alternative to be promoted. Working on this logic of global public goods allows, not by chance, a return to one of the original meanings that the word communication has had — the Latin *communis* — which has been distorted, blurred, or even lost over the years.

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