

The Liquid Proposal Facing Democratic Challenges

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Abstract: The objective is to show how Liquid Democracy intends to assume the sine qua non conditions of a true democracy and undertake the democratic challenges to achieve a good democratic quality. The conceptual analysis methodology reviews the origin and modalities of Liquid Democracy to evaluate it against the requirements indicated by Morlino and examine its possibilities through the challenges described by Linz and the dangers exposed by Levitsky and Ziblatt. The results present the level of quality attainable by liquid modalities. In contemporary conditions, the analysis also detects the confusion of Liquid Democracy with Electronic Democracy and the risks that both have acquiring technocracy seeking technopolitics. The originality of the analysis includes links to patterns of algorithmic democracy and artificial intelligence. In conclusion the article shows the value of the liquid model and elements of its political and communicative quality. The conclusions also point to some opportunities to improve democracy.

Keywords: Deliberation, delegation, proxies, digital, algorithms, artificial intelligence

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, democracy inherits various diagnoses with a balance that confronts it with several challenges. Among other reasons, due to the multiplication of its complexity (Innerarity, 2020), the different circumstances that require different modalities for its execution (Saward, 2021) and the unavoidable conditions of the right to freedom of expression to share information through the new media. The new forms of informative, communicative, and deliberative interaction, in democratic contexts, also present the interventions of digital technologies as desirable.

The new communicative forms in turn promote new forms of democratic interaction that can help the Liquid Democracy proposal. Exposing and analyzing Liquid Democracy, with its distinctions and the nuances of its modalities, aims to address the conditions that a democratic regime must meet, according to the criteria of Morlino (2004), to obtain not only democracy, but a democracy of good quality. Similarly, it analyzes how Liquid Democracy can meet some of the challenges pointed out by Linz (1978), and the dangers warned by Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018). Among the conditions and challenges that will be specified in the future, the following stand out: freedom of suffrage,

equality of circumstances for citizens vis-à-vis the various political agents, freedom of expression to provide and receive critically reliable information, limit populism and, above all, structurally influencing politics by aspiring to have an adaptation between the political system and the aspirations of citizens beyond circumstantial activism.

In order to fulfil the objective of showing the formulation of democracy by the liquid model and considering the scope of the sine qua non conditions of a democratic regime and the ways in which it can address some of its main challenges, the methodological itinerary exposes the origin and description of Liquid Democracy; it alludes to the democratic conditions and challenges to examine how the liquid model undertakes it; warns of the confusion of Liquid Democracy with electronic democracy and the liquid danger (obtaining digital technocracy in exchange for technopolitics) and finally points out some conclusions drawn.

The results and conclusions drawn show that, Liquid Democracy can meet the conditions of a quality democratic model and, consequently, address the main structural challenges. However, it has difficulties in some particular moments of the operation and also in avoiding communicative vices during the deliberation process. A deficiency that requires adjustments is in the legal incoherence or legal fragmentation when it tries to include dissimilar tendencies typical of multiculturalism.

2. Origin of Liquid Democracy

Liquid Democracy, due to its adjective, is usually associated with being ephemeral, fragile, vertiginous, or versatile. Certainly "liquid" alludes to versatility, but not necessarily to it being something frivolous, banal, or completely fragile. As Aguirre (2019) has described, the first accepted record for "Liquid Democracy" comes from the middle of the year 2000 from a blog that is no longer in force, but has left traces (Kuhn 2013, 26; Mendoza 2015, 47). The adjective "liquid" in this democratic model generates the sensation of a democracy at the forefront, but the idea itself and its procedure, according to Ford (2002, 2014) and Behrens (2017), was theoretically born in 1884 by the proposal of Charles Dodgson (better known as Lewis Carroll) in the text *The Principles of Parliamentary Representation*. In that text, Dodgson explains proxy voting (voting through a proxy with binding representativeness and subject to recall) as a proxy vote that can be transitive, that is, both temporary and meta-delegated. The proposal arose from concerns about obtaining a method capable of selecting the best candidates, achieving the fairest representation, and defending minority preferences.

The history of the various voting methods and their variations is long. The variations that the Dodgson method made on the bases of the Condorcet method allow avoiding the dictatorship of the majority over minority preferences. In practice, there was a case prior to Dodgson's intention with the positional method of James W. Bucklin: in 1843 the city of Nashville managed to become the capital of the US state of Tennessee, despite the fact that the city of Memphis had the majority of the voters. Two stipulations of the Dodgson method are important for Liquid Democracy in the variations of its application: that there are more than one round of voting and those preferences can be adjusted during new voting sequences. Dodgson's methods, variations of positional methods, and ideas gained prestige because it allows voters to shift its vote in cycles, adjusting trends as results become known between the first and subsequent rounds of voting. Although Dodgson's prestige

was late, he was recognized by Black's inclusion (1958, 224-234), where he assigns it the highest importance, second only to Condorcet. Iain McLean and Arnold B. Urken (1995, 288-297) McLean and Fiona Hewitt (1994, 3-90) consider it the same way. The possibility of adjusting the direction of the vote and changing trends, to the extent that the results or the debates are known, implies enormous versatility, which is why today the model is described as "liquid".

According to studies by Paulin (2014), Liquid Democracy, under names such as deliberative democracy or proxy voting, appeared in 1912 when William S. O'Ren demanded an interactive representation by requiring each proxy representative to weigh the number of votes; using a weighting method that was designed by Gordon Tullock until 1967 and proposed direct participation while stating that parliamentary debates should be broadcast on television. In 1969, James C. Miller argued for the right to vote on any issue on behalf of himself or through a representative from outside parliament, which today could be called "independent", both from parties and from parliament itself, but when they conceive the subject of the legislative agenda in an ad hoc manner, then the representation is strengthened through the expertise of the proxies.

Due to the above, it is understood that Tullock in 1967 indicated that parliamentary deliberations should be televised: so that, voters could adjust their election and their selection of representatives or the intervention itself. In 1967 all these electoral procedures had great communication limitations, but in the current digital age this condition is technically feasible. However, by incorporating the contributions of digital technologies, confusion with the so-called electronic democracy has begun. At the same time, significant public vices have also been incorporated from certain undesirable digital practices, such as fake news, echo chambers, algorithmic manipulation, and polarization.

Liquid Democracy matches the versatility and speed aspects of the sociological and cultural perspective of liquid trends and takes advantage of advances in digital technologies and artificial intelligence. It does not conceive of representatives or parliamentary institutions as fixed and immovable realities, until the corresponding changes or replacements by new elections or reforms. It conceives the exercise and delegative communicability of sob citizenship with a mutability and expeditious adaptability to the multiple needs of the petitions, the public agenda, to the adjustments and corrections offered by the plebiscites, referendums and recalls, as soon as it is urgent, without waiting for the electoral deadlines or the periods of the parliamentary legislative work.

Liquid Democracy is a new denomination, in the process of consolidation, for a construct that seeks various scales of deliberation and the instrumentation of its votes on those scales. At the same time, it requires the use of digital technology to run in communities with numerous members. This adds another reason for its confusion with the electronic version of democracy, since functionally it seems to be reduced to the mere insertion of electronic voting in various processes of the political organization of public power. Its nomenclature has spread to the Wikipedia spaces in Spanish and French. In the English and German versions, through the P2PFWiki platform and under the name delegating voting, respectively. In the academic sphere, its appearance is increasingly frequent in articles, book chapters and conference proceedings; works published in various languages including Spanish, French, English, German and Russian. Since 2014 it has been explained and promoted by The Liquid Democracy Journal (<http://www.liquiddemocracymagazine.org>) from Berlin. In political science environments it is known as deliberative democracy, proxy voting, delegative democracy

(but in a very different sense from the O'Donnell (1995) conception that, instead of delegating sovereignty through voting, declines in the representatives) or contemporaneously as internet democracy, digital or technopolitical democracy (Kurban, Peña-López and Haberer, 2016).

3. Modalities of Liquid Democracy

In the liquid model, citizens do not decline their sovereignty over political representatives for fixed periods, but instead exercise or delegate it in various ways (Blum and Zuber, 2016). The liquid representation is not fiduciary, that is, the representatives are chosen with binding, imperative and supportive stipulations of the preferences of the represented. So the representatives in the chambers could not conduct themselves without restrictions, only to the extent that their constituents authorize it.

The liquid model promotes the power to replace political representation (fiduciary or declination type) by delegation, that is, a citizen has the alternative of participating directly or depositing his sovereignty in another so that his depositary (called representative or proxy) act in the sense or the intention that is entrusted, in an imperative manner before the matter in the political agenda. Or if it were the case, the proxy, -if it is authorized to do so-, can delegate its accumulated votes to another proxy. Thus, a proxy representative can receive accumulated delegations, that is, in addition to having his vote and the vote of those who elected him directly, he can receive the delegation of other proxy representatives. Therefore, proxies of proxies can be built by forming chains with higher representative strength for a final decision. In this there is an important element for deliberation and electoral transparency: each citizen can make public the personal discernment by which they choose their proxy representative, so that other citizens join his selection, since the delegation can be changed to another proxy before the final term to define or execute a public policy. In this sense, the proxy representative is compelled to act with total transparency regarding the interests of the electors-delegates. An ideal proxy representative is an ad hoc representative to whom sovereign power is optionally delegated, to deal exclusively with matters in which his specialty is recognized or due to trust in his probity. However, far from ideal, the reasons for selecting a proxy can be several: lack of interest in participating directly, lack of time to educate themselves and participate in matters directly, or the recognition that the representative will participate better politically than the represented one.

On the other hand, due to the development of legislation that protects the data of individuals and confidentiality, the debate on the power to make public, or not, the deliberation to choose a proxy has been established. The discussion is important because the proxy representative is a proxy who acts in the name and on behalf of those represented and not only on behalf of the person who delegated power of attorney to him.

Sovereignty, in the liquid model, is exercised not only to elect an ad hoc proxy representative required by the issue to legislate, but also, to deliberate on the contents of the political agenda and the best representatives, to participate in the elaboration of the public policies and to decide and execute action plans and programs.

The strategies and modalities of Liquid Democracy can be synthesized according to the description and examples compiled by Aguirre (2019) in one or more of the following combinations: (1) the citizen can represent himself in the chambers or parliaments; especially in the defining and decision-making processes of public policies, (2) the citizen can represent himself by participating with the accounting of his proportional part of sovereignty (or adding the proportional parts of those who have chosen him as proxy) in the seat corresponding to the representation or representative of his electoral or political district or, failing that, in the space corresponding to the elected political party of his constituency. The corresponding political party should adopt the liquid modality, that is, its partisan members would accept that their presence in the chamber or parliaments will be displaced by the presence of the voters or that their presence obeys the binding and imperative function between the voters and the resolutions parliamentarians that they will adopt and (3) be represented through ad hoc proxies in assemblies of any scale, depending on the subject and design of the political agenda.

The first and third alternatives of Liquid Democracy were formally born in the French Constitution of 1793, in whose article 29 it was established that "every citizen has the same right to attend the formation of the law and the appointment of their representatives or agents". This formulation differs subtly, but powerfully, from the Declaration of 1789. According to the Declaration of 1789, it is possible to participate in the formation of the law or leave it in the hands of the representatives, while the French Constitution of 1793 allows the formation of the law and the appointment of the representatives. These are agents, that is, ad hoc proxies. An empirical version can be found in the Paris Commune of 1871, as a model of self-managed government that lacked elected representatives through a formalized procedure. A representative (especially if he is a trustee) is not the same as a representative or agent as a binding and revocable proxy. The dilemma of intervening directly or through representatives in the *res publica* is so fundamental that the spirit of this French notion is in force in article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, U.N., 1996), which grants all citizens the right and opportunity to "Participate in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives." The Covenant is signed by most of the nations of the world.

Proxies are not simple trustees thanks to a partisan electoral victory, to the extent that their votes can be rejected, as happened in the small demos of the Paris Commune and the first local level soviets. The Spanish project Democracy 4.0 (Jurado, 2014), still to be consolidated in practice, illustrates this first alternative, made possible by digital technologies. Jan Van Dijk's (2000) proposal, called Libertarian Democracy and conceived as plebiscitary democracy -inspired by the democratic autonomy of Held (1991)- is another model that postulates citizen participation through digital technologies, in a way that eliminates the representative functions. Hence the ambiguous comparisons of Liquid Democracy with digital or electronic democracy.

The second alternative of Liquid Democracy is exemplified by liquid parties. The International Pirate Party stands out (Khutkyy, 2019). This party, founded in 2006 in Sweden and Germany, in 2009 reached two seats in the Parliament of the European Union; in 2012, two national senates in the Czech Republic and Iceland; in 2014 it reached 251 local seats in Germany and one in the Parliament of the European Union; in October 2016 it became the third political force in Iceland. Each territorial

legislation can condition, anonymously or publicly, the delegation received in the representation of the members or party spaces in the chambers. In colloquial terms, liquid parties are pirates because they do not recognize the "reserved right" (such as trademark rights) to engage in politics that fiduciary representatives take advantage of only for themselves or that, party representatives exercise under partisan corporatism with indifference to their electorate. In Spain there are cases consolidated by the internal organization and militant responsibility in the parties Podemos (<https://podemos.info/>) and Barcelona en Comú (<https://barcelonaencomu.cat/>). An illustrative example is the action, on September 12, 2013, by the Spanish deputy Joan Baldoví -of the coalition of the Equo-Compromís parties- who had his seat in the sense of the open vote that the voters expressed on the Internet of his constituency. In all cases, digital technologies work to establish the deliberative ways of participation with the purpose of overcoming the limitations of representativeness, as well as, space and time.

The very fluidity of the liquid model makes it difficult to refer to empirical cases which, like any incipient model and present on multiple scales, has combinatorics that are neither universal nor fixed. Consequently, some of the alternatives are still far from being legally recognized (Vestri, 2015).

However, Liquid Democracy in its modalities (2) and (3) achieves participation in representative institutions, achieving, at least in delegation, the deliberation required by the completeness of the direct model. Modality (1) displaces representative institutions to the extent that citizens intervene directly. This case exists in the incipient experience of open parliaments (Ferri, 2012), some attempts at electronic parliaments (Leston-Bandeira & Bender, 2013; Fallon, Beccy & Williamson, 2011) and successful experiences such as LabHacker and eDemocracia in Brazil, Parlement et Citoyens in France, Estonian People's Assembly and Rahvvalgatus in Estonia (Simon et. al., 2017, 19-35). In Chile, the experiences called 'Virtual Senator', implemented in 2003, and the 'Senators' Chat', applied from September 2004 to May 2005 at the initiative of the then president of the Senate, Hernán Larraín, were both registered. Both were rudimentarily successful because of the absence of a deep deliberation and the imperative link that did not cause its persistence (Araya and Barría, 2009). Therefore, it can be conjectured that modality (1) would be more viable to the extent that there are transitions towards better practices through modality (2). With which, participation unfolds in semi-direct and semi-representative modes.

To calculate the proportional and cumulative value of the votes delegated in the modality (2) and in the meta-delegations of proxies of proxies in the strategy (3), as well as, to satisfy the broad communicative need for deliberation, delegation and revocation of the vote; to publicize the reasons for delegation and meta-delegation in a proxy and the accountability of proxies, the liquid model contemplates the inclusion of digital technologies and contributions from artificial intelligence.

Due to the above, in the first period of the empirical development of this model there have been proposals for each citizen to have an electronic application, with the purpose of casting their direct vote, as the current representatives do in the electronic board of red and green lights. That is located in the legislative chambers and that, in the future it would be "in the cloud" when it is determined as an open virtual parliament. Every day there is a greater tendency to propose electronic applications to execute modality (2) and link voters and their parliamentary representatives during voting sessions (Cárdenas, 2018).

Hence, liquid strategies and modalities build a new political agora as a virtual or digital parliament, alluding to its stay “in the cloud”, to use an expression from the web vocabulary. This instrumentation has caused Liquid Democracy to be equated or confused with electronic democracy.

4. Liquid Democracy undertake the democratic conditions and challenges

4.1. Democratic conditions sine qua non

The minimum political conditions and quality criteria for democracy have been discussed by recognized thinkers. As a result of the experienced application of qualification criteria of quality to democratic regimes, Morlino concludes that four characteristics should exist in a political system as sine qua non conditions: “universal, adult suffrage; recurring, free, competitive and fair elections; more than one political party; and more than one source of information” (Morlino, 2004, 10).

Liquid Democracy guarantees universal and mature suffrage not only because it calls for voting directly or through institutionalized or ad hoc representatives with the political agenda, but because it calls for participation with deliberations and the power to make public, the meaning of each voting citizen. In addition, the condition of a transitive vote (revocable) gives the quality of a delegative and non-declinative suffrage of the citizen’s power.

Free elections are guaranteed by Liquid Democracy, because it grants the power to participate directly or through representatives. In Liquid Democracy, elections are competitive on the largest possible scale because voters can choose any type of political actor: experts, proxies, traditional representatives, political parties that designate those who will give representative tasks and, obviously, the citizens themselves, when they want to participate directly. In addition, liquid elections include all political positions and the participation of all voting and eligible members.

The orientation of the vote is also competitive because the deliberative exercises raise the epistemological quality that justifies the meaning of the vote, since “liquid democracy has, due to its flexible delegation component and instant recall component, a greater capacity for mobilizing policy area expertise” (Blum and Zuber, 2016, 169). So that competitiveness is above the publicity of electoral marketing and guarantees fairness to the actors with fewer resources during the campaigns. In reciprocity, the liquid model is equitable for the voters because the range of eligible agents is outside the political parties, the candidates who are career politicians or the institutional options trapped in clientelism, patrimonialism and corporatism. Participatory equality depends on the equality of resources to assert interests directly (through voting) and indirectly (through proxies), and by making publicly known, during the deliberations the epistemological resources that guide the vote; therefore, it provides equality of resources in both forms of participation. The delegated and always revocable vote, implies the non-existence of electoral deadlines, therefore, the liquid model has as many recurrent elections as issues on the public agenda that need to be addressed.

The condition of at least two parties and alternation is met in the liquid model because it is not subject to electoral campaign periods, or limited to choosing between parties. The contents and

rhythms of the executive and legislative agendas open and close the voting periods and the alternations of the proxies, the ad hoc experts, or the direct participation of the citizens. The government can be guided by anyone who is involved in the processes to define public policies.

Regarding independent and free information, digital technologies provide the ideal spaces for communicative actions. Although it is not possible to guarantee the veracity of all the information, digital technologies are increasingly advancing in self-regulatory procedures to avoid fake news, polarization or hate speech and echo chambers with bubble effects, although this is independent of the liquid model.

However, the above sine qua non conditions are not enough to have a good democracy, only to achieve it. To achieve a good-quality democracy, Morlino (2004) adds five aspects that are dynamic: the validity of the rule of law, accountability, responsiveness (a relative correspondence between the political system and citizen wishes), respect for the rights and guarantees and, as a fifth aspect, the continuous progressive implementation of mechanisms of political, economic, and social equality.

The liquid model helps the permanence of the rule of law and promotes accountability in the very activity of dealing with the public agenda when it summons, carries out and accounts for the construction of public policies.

Responsiveness, understood as reciprocity between citizen wishes and the political system in its structure and functioning, is fulfilled in the liquid model by the various structural modalities, to choose to participate directly or choose to represent before, with a recall dynamic for the type of vote, and as a supplementary for the relief of the public agenda.

Respect for rights and guarantees is more characteristic of the protection of the judiciary and executive power, than of the legislative power. In this regard, Morlino acknowledges that "At the parliamentary level, party discipline is considered more important than accountability towards the electors and, in practice, the parliamentary majority supports the government without controlling it" (2004, 19). However, the liquid model seeks to control the government by the revocation capacity of the policies, that widened the margins of the bad practices of the judiciary and executive power. It is not by chance, that Linz points out, as one of the causes of the breakdown of democracies, the discredit of the parliamentary system, due to its structural fragility when it is kidnapped by party discipline (1978, 66). The displacement of political parties in the legislative power, sought by Liquid Democracy, seeks to put an end to this structural vice that causes and justifies, under a false mantle of partisan legality, the bad practices of the government.

Although it is true that Liquid Democracy cannot directly and permanently implement mechanisms of economic and social equality, it can nevertheless do so with political equality. The first could be achieved, only as an effect of good policies; political equality structures the accounting of the percentage that each individual vote is worth within collective sovereignty.

4.2. The democratic challenges

Whatever the conception and degree of quality of the different models of democracy, it not only requires minimum conditions, but is also exposed to challenges and dangers. Among many scholars

of democracy Linz (1978), Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) enjoy recognition when they illustrate the decline of democracy by noting many democratic challenges. The liquid proposal, like any other democratic proposal, seeks to overcome the greatest number of challenges and on this occasion, reference will be made to those consigned by these authors.

Linz (1978) states that, a strong reason for the breakdown of democracies is the discredit of the parliamentary system. Also, the structural fragility of the parliamentary system is caused by “polarization, centrifugal tendencies and the tendency towards irresponsibility” (Linz, 1978, 55). This implies that the parliamentary system does not give citizens the power they should have to influence government affairs and consequently, generates new problems such as, clientelism and patronage. Among the pernicious effects of a weak and discredited parliamentary system is the risk of falling into populism, of which Levitsky and Ziblatt have warned, indicating that democracies also die because unfair competitive actors, and specifically populists, have as *modus operandi* the denial of the legitimacy of the adversaries (2018, 32). Another pernicious effect of parliamentary weakness is the generation of alternative intermediation instances, which apparently are good at first sight, because the greater the number of intermediation instances. It could be thought that greater communicative and effective encounters will occur between the governors and the governed, but in reality that would be undesirable because it takes for granted that the structurally existing instances are useless and the “oversupply” of political options weaken parliamentary systems by generating polarization (Linz, 1978, 56). Liquid Democracy is no stranger to parliamentary representative discredit but tries to solve it without causing fragility by legitimizing them with the intervention of citizens directly or through ad hoc proxy representatives who are well accredited for their expertise and probity. With the recognition of the universal vote, direct or indirect and revocable, Liquid Democracy, far from denying the legitimacy of electoral or political opponents, recognizes in all the interlocutors a legitimacy and interest to intervene in public affairs. However, it does not fall into the excess of liberal individualism, nor can it be considered as a “competitive democracy” that annuls equal opportunities.

Liberalism, understood as the primacy of individual rights against collective rights, is the enemy of democracy for Linz as it is, in the contemporary circumstances of Liquid Democracy. Since liberalism causes “deep divisions and suspicions among the main participants [and] semi-highness” (Linz, 1978, 58). In contrast, Liquid Democracy in its search to displace or improve political representation does not propose the freedom of the individual, but a collective freedom. The liquid model respects the scales and hierarchies that voters want by delegating their sovereignty to proxies. The freedom and public deliberation promoted by Liquid Democracy, to intervene in the affairs of the State or to do so through representatives, builds the community and justifies the construction of proxies of proxies or megaproxies while safeguarding the loyalties to the parliamentary system. Through temporary and transitive voting, the voters can get rid of rogue proxies.

Linz recognized that, “It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the rhetoric of nationalism, compatible with a multinational state, from calls for the creation of a separate nation state” (1978, 59), because nationalists try “[...] to save the regime from the immediate danger of disloyal opposition shifting it in an authoritarian direction” (57). In other words, nationalism, the party system, interest groups and democratic hyper-leaders seek a monopoly on power, reason, and the word, unfairly

offering themselves as solutions. Not so with Liquid Democracy, which by nature is diverse and therefore, multicultural, multiethnic, and opposed to any monopolization of power that degenerates into authoritarianism. The transparency and temporality of the votes and the binding and revocable condition of the representatives constitute the liquid strategies to avoid monopolies, authoritarianism, and opacity in the government.

Liquid Democracy not only undertakes the task of avoiding the structural fragility of parliaments, but, in the words of Linz (1978, 16) when following Karl Dietrich Bracher (1952), it must address the loss and power vacuum with a new takeover. Attention to the loss occurs when it restores voter's confidence and options to intervene through the three liquid modalities defined through public policies. The power vacuum is addressed by displacing fiduciary representation by the binding one or by the direct modality where representation is guaranteed through the formula 'one citizen, one vote'. The new seizure of power, paradoxically, is constant with each recall, as part of a possibility to generate new calls for pending issues on the legislative or executive agenda.

In Liquid Democracy, when you vote in favour of proxies and they are given the power to delegate the accumulated votes to other proxies, there is tacit approval from other powers. But this does not happen, as Linz (1987, 61) denounces, when referring to secret and unfair negotiations, that break democracy. In Liquid Democracy, any sequential delegation must be previously authorized and requires transparency. This last aspect confronts the right to secrecy of the vote; however, each voter or group has the power to make their delegations public. Liquid Democracy with revocability and transparency avoids patronage and corporatism and thus, "does not transfer parliamentary power to an invisible field" (Linz, 1978, 56) as, for example, when pacts are made with the army, the bureaucracy or other power groups.

On the other hand, from the perspective of Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), Liquid Democracy does not reject the democratic rules that allow dissent or the existence of adversaries or the freedoms of the opposition. The three modalities of liquid structuring are not only open, but call for a multiplicity of approaches, since in the words of Linz "Democracy [...] requires mechanisms that allow the opposition [...] to have a significant participation in power [...] offering an opportunity to intervene in the legislative process" (1978, 67-68). Thus, modality two of Liquid Democracy allows a party system, with all three modalities direct, semi-direct and semi-representative electoral systems are present. Therefore, Liquid Democracy avoids identity distortions or the self-regulatory hijacking of democracy by the elites of the political class.

Levitsky and Ziblatt, in addition to warning about the rejection or weak acceptance of democratic rules, the denial of legitimacy of competing adversaries, the encouragement or tolerance of violence, and the inclination to restrict competitive actors representing the opposition, also include the limitation to the media within the fatalities prior to the death of a democratic regime (2018, 33-35). Liquid Democracy, by contrast, promotes media of all kinds. In the contemporary digital age, it makes special use of electronic information and communication technologies that, as exemplified, operate in some parliaments with ad hoc platforms and software. However, this has given reason to identify Liquid Democracy with electronics, causing confusion.

5. Confusions of Liquid Democracy with electronic democracy

It is well known, that at the same time a significant portion of the public sphere is moving to digital dimensions. Political parties and governments, already use digital platforms for many dynamics of social movement. According to the compilations (Aguirre, 2021; Ferreira, 2020; Paulin, 2020), there are five of the most outstanding. DemocracyOs (platform for delegative, revocable and transferable liquid vote - secret or not, depending on the desire to make it public so that other citizens can also delegate their representation to the most persuasive proxies - used by the Barcelona en Comú party that won the elections municipalities of 2015). Liquid Feedback incorporates preferential voting, assuming that it can include an infinite number of participants in a finite and conclusive discourse space (Behrens et. al., 2015). It is not used routinely, but some organizations have used it experimentally or to reach democratic consensus, as Google did in 2014 (Hardt, and Lopes, 2015), Slow Food Germany, Synaxon AG, (Paulin, 2020, 459). Adhocracy (software that has stood out for its deliberative and consensus capabilities, as used by the Federal Parliamentary Commission on the Internet and Digital Society in Germany). Votorola (originally designed for Liquid Democracy and considered by the German Pirate Party along with Liquid Feedback). Sovereign (software that allows the delegation of the vote limited to certain topics or in general, in a transitive way because it allows the cancellation of the votes made by the delegates or representatives - it can be public or secret - and has deliberative capabilities. It is successor software of DemocracyOS considered by the Argentine Partido de la Red for direct democracy as a liquid party). Other well-known platforms are Agoravoting, Appgree, Airesis, Civicracy, Array of Things, Župa, and Google votes. According to Paulin (2020) records, the only systems used in Liquid Democracy practices at different scales are Liquid-Feedback and Google Votes, although Votorola, Župa, Civicracy and Sovereign are prepared for the liquid model.

It could be said that, with the inclusion of digital technology and techno-determinist and cyber-optimistic attitudes, the traditional procedures of politics - by the mere fact of practicing with digital activities - will lead to better quality for deliberative democratic practices. With this confusion and cyber-optimism, it has been easy to hope that the digital version of democracy will be the new formula that will solve the problems and limitations of the very nature of previous democratic models (Landemore, 2021). The false comparison between electronic democracy (as an informative-communicative instrumental medium) and Liquid Democracy (as a political modality that gives greater scope to deliberative and delegative participation) was visualized by Renault (2013) when considering: the incorporation of digital technology to democracy comes from below by the hacker citizen and from above by traditional political institutions and agents. On the one hand, the common citizen wants to empower himself with digital technology that allows him to feel more powerful as an Internet user than as a subject of rights. Not surprisingly, Time magazine chose Internet users on its cover as the most important persons of the year 2006 "for founding and structuring the new digital democracy" (Grossman, 2006). On the government side, digital projects seek to acquire legitimacy by "creating a digital space that allows thousands of participants, regardless of their interests and abilities, to actively participate in public decision-making" (Renault, 2013, no/p). Unfortunately, all this was denigrated by surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) and algorithmic democracy (Innerarity and Colomina, 2020), as will be recorded later.

In sum, Liquid Democracy has been wrongly equated with the software and digital platforms of its electronic instrumentalization, (Kersting, 2012, 48) for several reasons. With digital technology, liquid voting mechanisms are easily adaptable to systems within parties and parliaments. The fluidity of the liquid model can only be achieved by digital technology that stores and manages all trends, relationships, and decisions of all citizens. Although the liquid model goes beyond being an advanced voting mechanism, it is supported by a complex political theory (deliberative, optional, epistemic, recall, semi-representative and semi-direct) that distinguishes the multiple functions of the delegated vote. But the liquid model does not limit participation to voting and opens the possibilities for governance. With the support of digital technologies, the liquid model overcomes representative deficits by mobilizing specialized knowledge in matters that each citizen considers to be of interest to them, achieving his epistemic superiority and egalitarian advances. The liquid model allows direct participation in many more processes than electoral opportunities, by making use of digital participation platforms. And finally, but not for that with fewer effects, because "Liquid Democracy is being a topic in two separate communities: democracy researchers and researchers interested in artificial intelligence" (Paulin, 2020, 462 -463). The former observes Liquid Democracy as a new form of democracy, the latter is interested in exploring the advances in decision-making processes (Kahng, Mackenzie and Procaccia, 2018; Zhang and Grossi, 2020). However, both groups agree that democratic accountability is an obligation greater for society than for the state and that, unfortunately, both investigations can be used for anti-democratic purposes.

Therefore, in Liquid Democracy, digital technologies can be used in two functions: one to deliberate and make decisions (with the informational, communicative, epistemic, and egalitarian conditions that this implies) and another to vote in direct modalities, by delegation, by goal -delegation and in the mechanisms of direct participation within representative institutions.

Thus, Liquid Democracy is not exactly equal to electronic democracy, in the same way, that the use of conventional ICT (Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, blogs, and so on) present a considerable distance from digital technologies of governmental work (the software and platforms for calls, consultations, deliberations, votes, transparency, accountability, audits, and citizen audits, and so on). But Liquid Democracy with the incorporation of digital technologies points to the emergence of techno-politics to insist on egalitarian epistemic processes that enable deliberation and the power to act through instruments of direct democracy and/or through proxies. Still, it is not without dangers.

6. The liquid danger: acquiring technocracy by seeking techno-politics

Although the development of techno-politics deserves a separate text, its construction can be succinctly described as the interaction between open data and social networks to influence government decisions, generating versions of electronic open, code and governance government, aimed at the collective construction of the distribution of political power in a decentralized way (Peña-López, 2011) but above all institutionalized, constitutionalized and democratizing.

Techno-politics - as a political tool of Liquid Democracy, in turn technologically instrumented - due to its digital subordination puts Liquid Democracy at the risks of digital technocracy. That is disinformation through false or biased news, to control the content used in the deliberation. The

manipulation of emotions, (by the information leakage with algorithms that seek to provoke echo chambers, polarization, and hate speech), the trend towards algorithmic democracy, (Innerarity and Colomina, 2020), such as "the replacement of people by mathematical models in democratic governments" (Calvo, 2019, 13) and decision-making is executed by artificial intelligence programs. In several countries (Sweden, Germany, France, Finland, Austria, Spain) applications are available via the internet to simplify the electoral decision according to the voter's profile. For example, VoteSwiper (<https://www.voteswiper.org/es>) and Tuvoto.eu, are applications that guarantee which political party to vote, according to the personal profile previously prepared with a questionnaire. In other words, political elections are held by cyber servers without guarantees of impartiality and the opportunity for discernment. Or "virtual politicians" (very distant from the Chilean "Virtual Senator" of 2003) are proposed for election, such as the Japanese robot Matsuda, whose algorithm (powered by the mechanics of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) and digital hyperconnectivity) uses the artificial intelligence to make public policy decisions, supposedly reliable due to his representativeness, objectivity, probity, and lack of emotions.

The abundance of data (both by its provocation and in its collection), organized by algorithms in artificial intelligence programs, does not guarantee the making of genuinely democratic public policy decisions. If the algorithms model the communicative world and then receive from the users the electoral preferences that they have caused (for example, Brexit or the United States presidential election in 2016), then it makes the citizen slip into anti-politics, into depoliticized reality, in the fallacy of not requiring intermediaries because digital technology became its only mediator.

In a text of these dimensions and purposes, it is not possible to address the details of the error of acquiring digital technocracy instead of technopolitical participation. It should be said that the alleged control of the Covid 19 pandemic, thanks to the calculation of algorithms fed with digital information from citizens, is a sample of the digitized technocracy that, regardless of its effectiveness, does not represent the liquid model assisted by the digital technology and perhaps no other democratic model.

7. Conclusions

In terms of the minimum conditions, quality and constant challenges to democracy, it can be said that almost all aspects are taken care of by the liquid model; although some are much better satisfied than others.

The sine qua non conditions indicated by Morlino (2004, 10) are fulfilled and, some times, even more so. The universal vote has three direct modalities in Liquid Democracy, one for each liquid modality; plus two indirect modalities when meta-delegation through proxy of proxies is allowed. The mature vote is also fulfilled when its deliberative discernment is made public in order to attract more voters to the election taken and, much more, when the vote is revocable... as the Italian Proverb says: A wise person sometimes changes his mind, but a fool never does.

The recurring, free, competitive and fair elections; it is also fulfilled by the epistemological leveling of the voters, the fluid and dynamic electoral agenda established by themes and not by periods,

and by the non-exclusive inclusion of political parties in the direct modality and in that of expert proxies. The condition of more than one political party is far exceeded, since political parties may or may not be necessary, when the important thing is the unlimited number of projects that can be presented. Regarding more than one source of information, all the use of digital technologies guarantees diverse sources. Although, unfortunately, it cannot be guaranteed that the vices of the new information technologies (echo chambers, polarization, bubble effects, etc.) are excluded. This is a task for the future of Liquid Democracy.

In relation to limiting the risks of populism; the deliberation and declared voting (Zhang and Zhu, 2018) that allow the argument of why to elect or change a representative, guarantees a more egalitarian debate. Populism is also limited by the permanent revocability of the vote. However, the danger of building “mega proxies” is well known and, given this risk, it is necessary to recognize another future task for the liquid model: to legislate the upper limit for receiving delegations.

Regarding the other warnings of Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018, 33-35), Liquid Democracy not only respects democratic rules, but also goes further and promotes the rules of direct, representative, participatory models and their mixtures. It recognizes the legitimacy of democratic competitors beyond one round of voting and, if necessary, uses multiple rounds or positional methods. By promoting deliberation, it fosters honest democratic opposition. However, if the representation is highly restricted (by binding imperative mandates and, in turn, the representatives feel highly controlled by revocability and substitution), then the representation becomes a reproduction of the citizen's will. If so, then what is the point of political representation with career officials or with the preparation and accumulation of experience? Undoubtedly, the balance in representation between citizens and governors is delicate. If the representative does not have limitations or margins of decision or revocability, then is it a representation or a substitution? Perhaps a severe but true answer is provided by Pitkin when, after 32 years of reflection after publishing one of the founding texts on this debate, she says: “the predominant result has been that representation has supplanted democracy instead of serving it” (2004, 339). However, a task that the liquid model must specify is the application of revocability before the representation under the distinction between the legislative and executive powers. In other words, under the distinction between sovereignty and government. That is, in direct citizen participation or by representation, because it belongs to the legislative task of a sovereign nature, the power of revocability is convenient. In the executive task, of a government nature, the convenience of revocability is less or, in cases of urgency and danger, null. Rousseau lucidly establishes it when explaining:

“Since the law is nothing other than the expression of the General Will, it is evident that in the legislative power the people cannot be represented; but it can and should be in the executive power, which is nothing more than force applied to the law” (Rousseau, 1998, 121)

Although the liquid model has strategies against populism, it does not directly affect violence. At least, it is clear that it does not promote discord because it seeks the representation of minorities. But it does not come close to the gorge of oligarchy because it generates intermediation with the representatives of the most desirable expertise. Therefore, it satisfies the need for institutionalized and non-institutionalized intermediations.

Despite the universality of the revocable liquid vote and the apparent multiculturalism and multiethnicity, the liquid model does not avoid legal inconsistencies by including dissimilar tendencies and has the risk of falling into legal fragmentation. Blum and Zuber (2016, 179 and 181) proposed including permanent expert public officials who warn of the risks of fragmentation. Perhaps the deployment of positional voting methods, assisted by artificial intelligence, could help include dissimilar trends without the need for legal guardians. Consequently, the liquid model needs to evolve structurally and instrumentally to avoid fragmentation.

In relation to digital voting and communication technologies, there is no doubt that taking advantage of the contributions of the digital age also requires self-correcting procedures for the difficulties that technology causes. It is necessary to recognize that "The digital revolution does not need censorship, it needs ethics" (Innerarity and Colomina, 2020, 21) so that, the biggest difficulties are not technological, but rather technopolitical education to execute deliberative and positional voting methods with the purpose of putting political power in favor of social and public order. The challenges of the digital future are not exclusive to Liquid Democracy.

The value of the liquid proposal lies in structurally influencing politics and not only through conjunctural activism directed at circumstantial cases. The aspiration of the liquid model focuses on a new structure of democracy where citizen participation is highly deliberative, especially when it is exercised by proxy representatives or by proxies of proxies or liquid parties. But the power to give an account and reason for it should be highlighted. However, some criticisms of the liquid model to be solved are: how to influence the periods and procedures to establish the political agenda?, how to define the deadline to revoke a proxy or conclude the deliberations?, what procedures can be applied to solve the collective difficulties of the final drafting of agreements and proposals? These difficulties open new lines of research for the liquid model and the technological supports that artificial intelligence can offer. The conjunction of both aspects has the capacity to build new fluid strategies and continue emancipating democracy from harassment.

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