Plato Revisited: E-direct Democracy in the Knowledge Society

Cristina de Abreu
Professor of Economics (UL)

José Caramelo Gomes
Professor of Law (UL)
Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

Winston Churchill
• **Theoretical Framework: Public-Choice Theory**

The Normative Analysis of Government Behaviour *versus* the Positive Analysis of Government Behaviour
• Theoretical Framework: Public-Choice Theory

The Normative Analysis of Government Behaviour (Theory of Welfare)

The organismic conception of the State = autonomous values patterns and an independent motivation from individuals.

Welfare Social Function Concept

Du Contrat Social (Rousseau, 1748)
• **Theoretical Framework: Public-Choice Theory**

The Positive Analysis of Government Behaviour

The organismic view of government is untrue because it is based upon a mythical entity: a state which is a thing apart from individual men. (A. Downs, 1957)

There is no match between a social welfare function (state) and multiple and diverse individual preferences functions, unless one part of the society imposes itself to the other part. (Keneth Arrow, 1951)

The state is a mean through which individuals satisfy some of their collective preferences. (J. Buchanan, 1949)
• **Theoretical Framework: Public-Choice Theory**

The Positive Analysis of Government Behaviour

*Non-existence of an orthodox State Welfare Function*

Public-Choice School endogeneizes government behaviour:

\[
\text{Max } U_{\text{gov}} = f(\text{Re}, \text{Pr}, \text{Pow})
\]

- \(U_{\text{gov}}\) = Utility of government
- \(\text{Re}\) = Revenue
- \(\text{Pr}\) = Prestige
- \(\text{Pow}\) = Power

(Downs, 1957)
Theoretical Framework: Public-Choice Theory
The Positive Analysis of Government Behaviour

G. Tullock (1967) inserts uncertainty and information costs into the analysis: Rent-Seeking Theory = Lobbies Theory
1 citizen -1 vote = the equality of individual power in a democracy
This is disrupted by influential groups in society with impact in voting behaviour of citizens and of government.
• *Theoretical Framework: Public-Choice Theory*

The Positive Analysis of Government Behaviour

The electoral campaign contributions and consequent elections probabilities (Young and Magee, 1986) adds a disruption with the ideal rule consequences of 1 citizen-1 vote.
The Crises of Representative Democracy

- *Logos of Democratic Foundations*
  - Ethics
  - Social Responsability
  - Competence
  - Aesthetics

- *Logos of Democracy Reality*
  - Non-ethical
  - Social Irresponsability
  - Incompetence
  - Corruption
• **Hypothesis for Solution:**

  Disintermediation:
  Lose the representatives
Theoretical Framework: Public-Choice Theory

Following Buchanan and Tullock (1965) we defend, concerning Public-Interest concept “falling back in the Pareto criterium for assessing changes, we admit as better only those changes that are observed to be approved unanimously by all members of the group. Any change that secures unanimously support is clearly desirable and we can say that such a change is in the public interest.”
• Case study:

Athenian Democracy (6th century BC)
Sovereign power in Athens
All citizens gathered at Ecclesia

Elect Generals (Military Power)
Council of 500 chosen by lot
Chose by lot the Archons
Chose by lot the Heliaia and the Aeropagus

Directed by Prytanes in turns of 1 Hellenic month
Submit proposals to Ecclesia
Supervision of the Archons

Preside and determine the order of the day of Ecclesia
• E-Democracy
  – E-participation
    • Public discussion
    • Blogs
    • Electronic petition
    • Social networking
    • E-Voting
Voting systems

Single winner
- Single votes
- Sequential votes
- Rated votes

Multiple winners
- Non-proportional methods
- Proportional methods
Voting systems

- Single winner
  - Direct democracy
  - Representative democracy
- Multiple winners
  - Representative democracy
E-democracy

E-representative democracy

E-voting for representatives

E-direct democracy

E-voting for Law and Politics

Non-proportional

Proportional

Single winner
The Future Today: ICT enabled functions, tasks and activities.

- Internet and cell phone Banking and Financial Services
- Telemedicine
- Web based lawsuit management / Electronic proceedings
- E-citizenship, E-government, E-democracy
- E-VOTING!!

So...
Disintermediation by ICT
Thank You