DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THE HYPERCONNECTED SOCIETY AND THE DIGITAL EXCLUDED

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Marcilaine Faustina de Oliveira Sodré[1], Nara Marinho[2] and Neury Piacente Júnior[3].

ABSTRACT

At the end of the twentieth century, many transformations occurred, affecting all spheres, public or private, both in the economic, social and political spheres, all so that society remained hyperconnected. Not unlike this, the Public Administration is also entering this digital context. In the present study, it is demonstrated how technological advancement within the Public Administration has been a challenge, because digital inequality still represents an obstacle to democracy. As a research method, a deductive approach was used based on bibliographic research. It was also found that new information technologies have influenced and have influenced the Public Administration process, so that there have been constant adaptations in electronic processes and services on government digital platforms. Despite the advantages of digital transformation and its positivity, mainly due to the moment in which the world is living, it must be considered that there are still digitally excluded groups and, for this reason, the Public Administration must be in constant reflection and development of public policies for digital inclusion in order to put into effect the principles of democracy and not just a stagnant model of Digital Government.

Keywords: Technology. Digital government. Digital excluded.

[1] Doctor in Legal Sciences from the Universidad del Museo Social Argentino (UMSA)
Master in Law from the Euripides University Center of Marília (UNIVEM)
Specialist and Bachelor of Laws from the State University of Mato Grosso (UNEMAT)
Email: marcilainesodre@gmail.com
[2] Master in Law from the Euripides University Center of Marília (UNIVEM)
Specialist in Real Estate Registry Law with an emphasis on Notarial Law, from the Leonardo da Vinci University Center
Bachelor in Law from the Catholic University of Salvador (UCSal)
Email: naramarinho@hotmail.com
[3] Master in Law from the Euripides University Center of Marília (UNIVEM)
Bachelor in Law from the University of Mogi das Cruzes
Researcher at the research group SIREITO, new technologies and social control (NODICO)

INTRODUCTION

The technological advancement driven in recent decades has been loaded with several alternatives to new forms of communication and information sharing, making it increasingly evident the numerous benefits brought by this digital transformation, especially in the Public Administration with the implementation of Digital Government with Law No. 14,129 published on March 29, 2021 (BRASIL, 2021).

In view of this scenario, the present work will be developed, with the philosophical and sociological basis of Roland Barthes (1993; 2001), Michel Crozier (1970) and the philosopher Michel Foucault (1979; 1999; 2000), among other authors and philosophers, with the objective of presenting some criticisms to certain sectoral behaviors of systems created with the intention of imposing some absolute truths to the people who depend and need to be inserted in the digital platforms of the Public Administration and these, in turn, end up accepting the situation, either for convenience or because they have no alternatives, systems that are categorized as "myth-making", such as the "truths" that (1) everyone has access to the internet; (2) all have specific ability to use mobile devices (smartphones) or computers and (3) all have any technology that allows them access to the world wide web.

In the face of such so-called "truths", the research seeks to address the question: What is the importance of taking into account the situation of the digitally excluded in the context of Digital Government?

The article will be developed by the deductive method, with bibliographic and documentary research, in which it seeks to demonstrate the benefits of digital transformation in public administration, without excusing the existence of the digital excluded in this context of technological ascension.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

On March 29, 2021, Law No. 14,129/2021, known as the Digital Government Law (BRASIL, 2021a), was published, effective for the Union in 90 (ninety) days, for the States and the Federal District in 120 (one hundred and twenty) days and for the Municipalities in 180 (one hundred and eighty) days, in which it establishes instruments and rules to increase the "efficiency of the Public Administration, especially through innovation, digital transformation, and citizen participation (BRASIL, 2021b)."

According to the Digital Government website (BRASIL, 2021b), the law seeks to bring digital solutions with the aim of making life easier for Brazilians,

a) implementing digital services accessible by mobile devices;

b) creating access to the Federal Government's single platform for information and services;

c) encouraging electronic signatures to have more interaction between public agencies and citizens;

d) strengthening transparency on data opened by the government;

e) applying technology to optimize Public Administration work processes.

The first feeling is that this new modality of government has come to modernize and simplify the relationship between the government and society. In the words of the Secretary of Debureaucratization, Management and Digital Government, Caio Mario Paes de Andrade (BRASIL, 2021b):

> The new legislation strengthens our path to building a 100% digital, open government, and with user-centered approaches and the digital transformation of processes and operations to reduce Public Administration expenses and improve service to the population.

In the same line of reasoning, the Secretary of Digital Government of the Ministry of Economy, Luís Felipe Monteiro (BRASIL, 2021b) points out that "Law No. 14,129 consolidated in the legislation advances that practical life already required, such as the possibility for citizens to solve their demands with the government 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in an agile way, comfortable and efficient".

The law presents the Digital Government as a platform with full technological infrastructure, allowing users easy access to public data, promoting the interaction of the various public agents in a safe, effective and responsible way. The intention is to stimulate innovation, encouraging the population to use the services that are already available on these platforms. Furthermore, the new legislation also encourages the creation of innovation laboratories, open to the participation and collaboration of society, in order to develop innovative tools and methods for public management, for the provision of public services and for data processing. Thus, the citizen will be able to feel increasingly participatory with regard to the control of the Public Administration.

Although the law refers to all spheres of the executive branch, Brazil was recently recognized by the World Bank (BRASIL, 2021c) as the seventh country in digital transformation in the public service due to the high adherence to the federal government's "gov.br" platform. In 2019, the number of users was 1.9 million, rising in 2021 to more than

115 million users, according to the Ministry of Economy (RUSSI, 2021), reaching 155 million users in 2023.

On the other hand, despite access to the internet, approximately 22 million Brazilians, according to the IBGE, have never accessed the world wide web, either due to the high price of the service or due to lack of devices. There is no doubt that the internet is an important mechanism for access to rights and full development of citizenship, in the same way the search for the digitalization of services is an inescapable guide, the parameters that where these changes are operating and the reality that is being configured will be the object of analysis.

THE PRODUCERS OF THE MYTH

Before explaining the title of this section and what it has in connection with the work, the definition of myth by the Frenchman Roland Barthes (2001) is consolidated, who defined it as the result of a dynamic process of recycling a sensorial speech that can be read through multiple perceptual channels. Myth is a double system that, in relation to its meaning, includes a second speech woven of concepts and associations. It is based on this concept that we can define the Digital Government project as a myth that, like any myth, is validated in iteration, that is, in the emphatic and recurrent repetition of "facts" always added by people who claim to be witnesses of their veracity and who, therefore, evidence what "everyone knows" and also end up "accepting" it as truth without question. In the words of Berrío-Zapata and Sant'ana (2017, p. 85):

> The myth is a statement in itself. Their motivations are expressed through non-arbitrary symbols and icons, intertwined between analogies and fables. Mythical language loses its arbitrariness with reiteration, and becomes naturalized as an objective version of the world. The myth is not a lie, it is an inflection of the 'truth'.

Based on this definition, we understand that the Government, by planning this new technology of access to data and public services, confirms the inflection of the truth, profusely used in Western society with rhetorical speeches. At this point we see how Barthes' (1993) study of myths in the 60s applies perfectly to the information society. The sociologist said that myth was a rhetorical image that fostered a representation of the world under a universal ideology, fighting for the conversion of reality, but omitting its ideological preferences, which included unquestionable truths: interactivity, the informational galaxy, artificial intelligence, and the digital divide.

In addition, the connotation of myth, for him, concealed the alienation built on implicit meanings behind the mask, a rhetorical system that confused utopia with reality. The

central axiom, for Barthes (1993), was the concept of "advancement", extracted from the utopias of the elites of Western society. It was never declared that this was a particular view of the elites, who perceived – and still perceive – such representation as the most appropriate among all representations of other communities, as if everyone was equal. An excellent representation of myth.

For Barthes (1993), these social structures were born from the application of what he called the "rhetorical machine": a social exercise of institutionalization of power to produce what "can exist". A system created to manufacture structured speeches ready to be consumed. This is how the discursive mythification of the digitally excluded was connotated.

Berrío-Zapata and Sant'ana (2017) reflect on this myth of Barthes (1993):

> Izidoro Blikstein (2003), who states that in order to move in time and social space, the individual establishes and articulates traits of differentiation and identification with which he can classify and differentiate the stimuli of the amorphous universe that surrounds him, and thus, construct the "real". These traits end up acquiring, due to praxis, a truth value and are transformed into ideological traits that configure semantic guides that act as molds for signification. Blikstein called these guides or molds "isotopies of culture." They are perceptual patterns, stereotypes of perception that filter everything like "social glasses". The interaction between language and praxis creates a circular feedback that feeds this stereotype and materializes it through praxis, to the point of considering our particular universe of references and fabricated realities as "real and objective". (BERRÍO-ZAPATA; SANT'ANA, 2017, p. 87).

We return to the term "social glasses" cited by Blikstein (2003 apud BERRÍO-ZAPATA; SANT'ANA, 2017). What we perceive in society – poverty, social injustices, hunger and digital exclusion, for example – is filtered through social glasses, fabricating realities as if they were real. At this point, the title of this section is resumed: the producers of myth. The Government's "speech" about the use of new technologies to access data and public services connotes ideologies and creates myths. In this speech, the isotopies of myth-producing societies are embedded. We must question, then, how we can criticize in order to resignify these realities in order to integrate them into our routine and how we can turn resignification into action to institutionalize it as a social "ought to be".

However, human beings tend to settle into their habits and ideas, not seeing beyond their possibilities. Only at the moment when a radical and unexpected occurrence refutes its truths, does man move in search of new certainties. Here emphasis is placed on the relationship between users of digital technologies and the social, cultural and geographical context in which we live, especially the user who is still neglected in the new proposals for the implementation of digital services accessible by mobile devices. This negligence, one could say, confirms three myths created by these myth-makers: (1) everyone has access to

the internet; (2) all have specific ability to use mobile devices (smartphones) or computers and (3) all have any technology that allows them access to the world wide web.

When it comes to transferring technology from one community to another of radically different speech, culture, economy and topography, an ever-widening abyss is created, preventing the construction of the bridge of access to the prestigious society. This means that, in the "global village", the communities of the "periphery" do not receive the technological current of the powerful "tribes". In this conflict, both parties always have costs, but they also gain some benefits, even those who are "dominated".

However, when this cost-benefit between dominant and dominated society becomes unfeasible, "social blocking" occurs, as Crozier (1970) states. Social blocking is understood when the receivers of the technology create resistance to the use through disinterest, ineffectiveness or trivialization of the new technological proposal, contrary to the urgency of implementing technological generators, which, in turn, do not understand the lack of ability and the delay in learning to use these digital tools. A meeting of worlds, of community perspectives that conflict, is then generated.

Thus, when, in the global village, these symbolic spaces of legitimation, domination, ideology, customs and beliefs collide through technology and the discourse of technological advancement necessary for a correct and transparent administration of public affairs, there is either a change in the habits of the dominated or the construction of a cemented wall of the symbolic capital of the[4] dominant, excluding the dominated.

GLOBALIZED COLONIALISM

The digital divide has been elevated, in the twenty-first century, to a level of a global plague, where the symbolic capital of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has been extremely valued. In order to better understand the expansion of these new technologies, the events of this century are analyzed based on globalized colonialism originating in the Soft Power inserted in ICT. At this point, the theories founded by Barthes (1993) are in line with those of Foucault (1979; 2000) and offer us a solid platform to research the connotations[5] of these events, considering their occurrences in a global scenario crossed by historical relations of domination, many of which are incompatible with the well-being of the majority of the population. Foucault's (1979; 2000) thought to

[4] Symbolic capital is understood as the credibility, time and prestige of a company. The existence of local Symbolic Capitals, devalued and mixed with *Habitus* incompatible with the globalizing system, it can anticipate the existence of silent conflicts.

[5] Property through which a name designates a series of attributes implicit in its meaning, beyond the direct and immediate link it maintains with the objects of reality.

understand the problems of the Network Society and to clarify the discursive structures mimicked under ideas such as the Digital Divide.

For Foucault (1979, 2000), the strategies and power structures of our time have become microscopic and capillary, spread everywhere and acting in the simplest and most everyday situations, advancing on domains that did not previously fall under their control. Between the eighteenth century and the end of the nineteenth century, a new type of exercise of power emerged that generated institutional transformations and political regimes. The new governance had a finely branched structure of domination that sought out individuals, inserting themselves into their gestures, attitudes, speeches, and their daily lives in general. The dominant ones filter the discourses through apparently inert structures such as architectures. It is the specialized spaces that segment people's routines, turning the control structure into a capillary system that manages the lives of the subjects. Foucault, therefore, named this phenomenon biopower.

Seen in this way, the proposal of architectures as devices of biopower finds application in Computer Science and in the concept of Digital Information Architecture (WURMAN, 1996). This architecture can be understood as a physical and symbolic dimension that keeps hidden various portions of the conceptual and cultural richness ingrained in its structures, techniques and materials. Architecture represents society, its most significant traits of protection and organization, through its cultural codes embodied in its construction technologies. It is a means of transmitting information about the measure of occupation of territories. In this bias, digital information architectures constitute a field of power and discourses ingrained in their designs, microchips, and networks.

It can be seen, therefore, that digital technologies represent the great and exceptional regulatory power in today's society. They are embedded in almost all activities and processes of modern society; they can define the routines of their users, creating ubiquitous patterns of control, such as traffic signs or the computer clock (space and time controlled and defined); they are icons instituted and mythologized by their technical and scientific complexities, giving the users of their providers (Google, Apple, Facebook, Microsoft, Oracle) the feeling of dominance and belonging, but, in fact, they are the ones who signal their directions in a very efficient way, becoming "gurus", true oracles of postmodern society or in the so-called liquid modernity (BAUMAN, 2001), always instituting new directions for humanity under the symbol of innovation.

And yet, they act as agents that produce universal doxas (at least in the West), using discourses assumed by users as natural due to their association with progress, fashion, success or power, perpetually guaranteeing domination over these same users who

invariably accept their adhesion contracts, giving up their freedom and privacy; they have the dual capacity to act concomitantly as a means of recognition and surveillance, recording the profile of preferences and habits of users, distributing utopias and harassing them in their most sensitive areas of desire.

Here lies the core of the questions of Foucault's philosophy (1999), in which the question arises: how can minority groups, governments and the elite, manipulate and control majorities of the social body? Foucault's (1999) proposal was the concept of Power Techniques and biopower, scattered and hidden among institutions, architectures and everyday life, permanently evaluating, classifying, punishing and rewarding.

One of the most significant technologies of power, which is of great interest to this work, is biopolitics. The concept of the term was sought in academic sources to guide what is discussed in this article.

> Biopolitics is the rationalization of the problems of government practice through the creation of classificatory groupings of phenomena that affect the population as a whole. Thus, action on the masses is legitimized, using scientific and statistical categories to label their states and symptoms. The discourse of 'technical truth' is what validates the action on people. Examples of this narrative are public health, hygiene, birth rates, life expectancy, and macroeconomics. The technical and scientific element regulates the 'reason of state' by making it a 'neutral' action that is developed for the 'common good'. Biopolitics is a 'rational administration of the citizen' by virtue of the universal technical, scientific and moral principles, which define what well-being and freedom are. (BERRÍO-ZAPATA; SANT'ANA, 2017, p. 99).

It is understood that this is a primordial concept to understand what digital exclusion is because it fits into the category of a problem of global well-being and governance, giving the false idea of freedom to the user. It works as an alibi of power to influence the bodies of the Public Administration and take care of primordial issues of political interests. It symbolizes the project of managing the well-being and protection of communities excluded from the benefits of "progress".

Thus, this informational architecture, developed under the label of Digital Technologies, but with the content of Technologies of Power, results from the passive exercise (capture of traces and digital footprints left by users) and active (search and real-time monitoring of the actions of the subjects) of the massive monitoring of the population, legitimized under the false statute of defense of citizens, but destroying privacy, when it records in detail the movements of all members of society to anticipate threats.

The scariest thing is that the inclusion of citizens in government systems is voluntary, because, in exchange for the advantages that the system offers, they voluntarily surrender their identity and privacy, "signing" a contract that tacitly or openly accepts the "intrusion" of suppliers in the lives of users. It is the covert and naturalized cost of digital inclusion on

platforms managed by the Digital Government. To ensure efficiency, speed in requests, in the payment of taxes and all kinds of facilitation promised by the new digital system, citizens admit such a situation.

As can be seen, the Information Society model and the concepts of digital inclusion and exclusion may be causing more harm than good. The issue cannot be treated as a simple economic fact of underdeveloped countries. It is not a matter of reducing the cost of computers and mobile devices and making internet access available to all communities, accelerating the transfer of Information Technology, but of generating conditions for the mastery of the technique and its transformation by the majority populations of the periphery.

GOVERNMENT PLATFORMS AND THE DIGITAL EXCLUDED

As observed in this article, in view of the current world in which society finds itself, the application of new technologies is urgent and necessary, and their inclusion in the routine of people and companies requires continuous and rapid change, however, accompanied by all development, new problems and solutions arise all the time and the Public Administration needs to be aware of these novelties, in order to pair not only the public sectors as well elucidated by the Digital Government Law, but also to pair the citizens themselves, as a way to reduce the digital excluded, especially in the face of the democratic State that proposes to guarantee material equality or, at least, equality of opportunities among citizens.

It is of paramount relevance, therefore, to understand that Digital Government is not a concrete end to be employed abruptly, but a meticulous process of implementing digital technologies, which justifies the importance of keeping up with the pace at which people, in a given context (moment and reality) are adhering to technologies. It is not enough just to make the technology itself available, but to properly monitor it so that it is covered in conditions of use – this includes material capacity and knowledge and handling – by the entire population.

In view of this scenario, it is verified that cyberculture has become a reality for people of all social classes and age groups in Brazil, which does not mean that there is no difference between social classes, quite the contrary, because the digital exclusion is visible, considered as cyberexclusion that can be considered one of the segments of social inequality.

However, it is important to note that the UN General Assembly (2014, p. 18), at the 17th session of the Human Rights Council, considered access to the internet as a

fundamental right[6]. Thus, it can be inferred that access to education in cyberculture is a fundamental right, because, in order to think of the internet as a fundamental right, it is first necessary to have access to adequate inputs and knowledge.

However, it is unfeasible to think about the development, interaction, production and transition of information and globalized knowledge, in full human beings, without education with access to cyberculture, because it is currently no exaggeration to say that this is part of human dignity, which is a fundamental right. In addition, those who have adequate access to cyberculture have different behaviors, knowledge, cognitive skills and potentialities than those who are cyberexcluded.

On the other hand, it is estimated that the development of cyberculture is a factor of inequality and exclusion between the classes of a society, since access to cyberspace, as a rule, requires a high cost for developing regions. For this reason, there is an urgent need to overcome many obstacles in the face of the existence of some myths created by myth producers, because, despite the fact that today's world is hyperconnected, not everyone has access to the world wide web, and those who do have are still excluded from those who lack the skills to handle a smartphone or other device. Added to this is the fact that not everyone has access to the network yet, so it is necessary, first of all, to guarantee access to cyberculture education.

With these assumptions, it is guaranteed that it is necessary to overcome several obstacles and, especially, the "human" obstacle in favor of the digitally excluded. Of course, there is a clear notion that the number of connected people has increased considerably since the end of the 80s, especially among young people, the digital natives, and that the connection to the network has been more popular in financial and geographical terms. These facts together end up greatly reducing the unequivocal perception of digital incompetence, although it is still evident that the installation and maintenance of cyberspace infrastructures require, in fact, well-developed skills in users, which will still take a few years to reduce the number of digital excluded. Perhaps we have to wait for these digital natives to be all of citizen age to actually and rightfully exercise the benefits implemented by the Digital Government.

6 *Invest in the promotion of the right to access information. In order to enhance the implementation of the national norms protecting the right to access information, the capacity of the Commission for Protection of the Right to Free Access should be enhanced. The reports periodically prepared by the Commission should contain more detailed information, including disaggregated data on the requests made to multiple State entities, and provide specific recommendations to address non-compliance with the law. Further efforts are also necessary to ensure that State institutions have the capacity to respond in a timely fashion to requests for information. Further investment should also be made in raising public awareness of the law and the procedures for requesting information.*

The fact is that any advance in communication systems necessarily entails some exclusion, since each new communication system manufactures its own excluded. And the idea of cyberculture is to ensure that citizens get involved, because the problem of "access for all" cannot be reduced to the technological, geographical and financial dimensions usually involved. It is not about having a citizen, who feels excluded in various segments of community life, in front of a screen, equipped with all the friendly interfaces for digital use, to overcome a situation of inferiority. It is necessary, first of all, that it be in a position to actively participate in the processes of collective intelligence that represent the main interest of cyberspace in the fight against inequalities.

On the other hand, it is necessary to avoid the emergence of new dependencies caused by the consumption of information or communication services designed and produced from a purely commercial perspective, which often have the effect of disqualifying the traditional knowledge and skills of disadvantaged social groups and regions, causing the percentage of digitally excluded people to be increased. however, the Public Administration must have as a priority to meet all the principles and guidelines of Digital Government and public efficiency, under the terms of article 3 of Law 14.129 (BRASIL, 2021a) and also favor citizens with access to full education and cyberculture. The words of Balboni (2007, p. 1) are used to give substance to the present words:

> The Information Society is today an unquestionable reality for a significant portion of the Brazilian population. As it develops, the concern of the government and organized portions of civil society in relation to access to Information and Communication Technologies in Brazil (ICTs) grows, considered a prerequisite for democratic participation in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

It is important to understand the relevance of digital transformation for today's society, as we are experiencing the Fourth Industrial Revolution (SCHWAB, 2016). It is from intelligent policies that technological management is achieved that guarantees the provision of services and solutions that promote the infamous social well-being. As a result, smart government emerges with the purpose of making public management more agile and efficient, implementing, for this, management with modernizing actions linked to administration, aiming at the advancement of citizenship.

Therefore, it was clear that the administrative evolution has gone through a long road, but still has an extensive path to be traced, although today it is one step ahead of what we know with the Electronic Government that was instituted in the 2000s, due to the institution of the so-called Digital Government with the objective of valuing the use of

Information and Communication Technologies and employing strategies that effectively meet continuous demands and emerging markets.

Nevertheless, as important as the significant changes that are happening with the technological development and implementation of Digital Government, will be the subsequent analysis of each of them in order not to fail to contemplate the population as a whole, such as the digital excluded, so that continuous improvements are employed, in addition to the new tools and systems used by the public administration.

On the other hand, digital transformation and new forms of communication, in which information is posted and shared instantly and in an immeasurable scope, end up generating a sense of power in users, who often ignore the perception that responsibility should be the basic precept of good coexistence in this environment, which refers to what Foucault (1979) treats as "biopower", in which the dominant ones filter the discourses through apparently inert structures such as architectures, making the control structure a capillary system that manages the lives of the subjects.

It is possible to conclude that, in fact, the way people live together on the network cannot occur indiscriminately, ignoring minimum criteria of responsibility, because if this occurs, the damage will accumulate and society will be the victim of serious social instability, further aggravating inequality among citizens, when, in fact, what is desired is that technological advancement develops with attention, including the digitally excluded, in order to prevail the basic principles of a democratic rule of law.

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