CIVIL SOCIETY: MONITORY DEMOCRACY AND MEDIA IN JOHN KEANE

PhD
ENGLISH ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

There are essentially two basic reasons for the preeminent position that reflection on civil society has acquired among theorists of democracy today. The first of these is directly linked to the problems and crises experienced by different types of state, whether communist, military or welfare, in the contexts of the former Eastern bloc, Latin America or Western Europe, respectively. The second reason is directly related to the process of globalisation and the increase in cross-border problems that go beyond the frontiers and the regulatory capacity of nation-states.

Since the 1980s, the current context of political thought has been marked by the vigorous resurgence of the concept of civil society that, although used by some political theorists, had fallen into disuse throughout the second half of the 20th century. What is new about reflection on civil society is that the growth of global interrelationships and the globalisation process have led to a situation in which many democratic theories no longer focus exclusively on the regulatory role of the state, and open up the way for opportunities offered by a global civil society.

This resurgence of the concept of civil society in the arena of political debate, together with an incipient reflection on the concept of the global civil society, has been understood and identified in different ways: as a resurgence, as a rebirth, or as a new wave. All indications are that civil society is heading towards the demand for greater citizen decision-making capacity on a wide range of issues associated with public life. This capacity can be understood in such disparate ways as the exercise of influence, direct participation in general issues, or the exhaustive monitoring of all social, political, and economic agents that hold certain powers in accordance with the democratic model on which they are sustained.

However, due to the ambivalence and plurality of meanings with which these concepts have been associated in recent decades, any analysis of the reappearance of civil society and the emerging global civil society is far from simple. Conceptualisations of civil society are both abundant and heterogeneous, and consequently any understanding of its meaning is still a long way from presenting shared, generally accepted common traits. Moreover, recent years have witnessed a staggering increase in research on the resurgence of the concept of civil society, its variations and the debates that surround it.
Despite these difficulties, the aim of the present dissertation is to analyse this complexity from the concept of civil society proposed in the work of Keane, in conjunction with Habermas’s contributions on discourse ethics, and the interpretation of the latter by what is now known as the Valencia School. To this end, I adopt an ethical perspective concerned both with justifying the normative principles of civil society and with their possible application in the mass media as one of the main actors in civil society.

The relevance of Keane’s work lies in the fact that he is one of the contemporary scholars that has most systematically and exhaustively theorised on the meaning of the concept of civil society since the beginning of its resurgence in the 1980s. Furthermore, his analysis has evolved way beyond his initial conceptualisations, through his exhaustive exploration of the possibilities and limitations of the concept in his writings and the constant inclusion of new issues in response to innovations or new perspectives. One example of this evolution is his theorisation on global civil society in 2003, in response to the blurring of the frontiers of civil society. It is precisely this attitude of constant preoccupation about and attention to changes in today’s society that has led Keane to incessantly explore the notion of civil society and to incorporate new concepts such as cosmocracy and monitory democracy into his theoretical proposals.

Among the potentialities to be found in Keane’s proposals, in this study I argue that his concept of civil society is capable of tackling the current globalisation process without losing its critical attitude and at the same time, it is an appropriate tool with which to explain one of the most important agents in today’s society: the mass media. The author explores the role of these agents not only in relation to the public sphere, another key notion in his democratic proposal, but also by extending his analysis to the transforming potential of the mass media on democracy. This leads him to an innovative association of three concepts in his latest work on monitory democracy: the public sphere, civil society and democracy.

The present dissertation, however, is not limited to descriptive analysis of Keane’s proposals; rather, I attempt to go a stage further by complementing his theory with other approaches. One of the main criticisms I will make of Keane’s model is its scant consideration of the necessary justification of the principles and values associated with civil society. Indeed, his model, based on ideal types, refutes the need for and possibility of any justification of the principles of civil society. In this way, the
The normative character that all critical interpretation of the concept unavoidably acquires is not justified by the author.

By calling for justification, I do not deny that the concept of civil society can also be used to explain a given reality, or that it may be employed as a strategy to achieve certain political aims. Rather, I attempt to argue that the use of the concept always presupposes a basic normative dimension that carries with it a specific understanding of the word “civil” and brings to the term a set of principles that if not justified, do not explain its validity. In other words, the justification of principles associated with civil society, such as pluralism and non-violence, is necessary in order to understand the reason why these and not other principles are used to consider the concept. The normative dimension, in my view, cannot remain silenced; in other words it cannot remain without being justified if we aspire to define its character, to explain how it differs from the simple idea of society, and to understand why the sphere of civil society must be associated with one set of principles, and not others that may also be possible. This is the main reason why I shall attempt to complement the justification of the principles of civil society through Habermas’s discourse ethics, a reflection that enables us to examine a perspective capable of reconstructing the normative principles generally associated with civil society.

However, in this dialogue between Keane and Habermas their contributions are reciprocal. While Habermas is essential to the reconstruction of the normative presuppositions that underlie civil society, in other words the moral principles of civil society, Keane’s proposal is indispensable to delimit the space inhabited by civil society and as we shall see, it goes far beyond what Habermas is capable of accepting.

Therefore, the two basic ideas that I will attempt to argue through the study of Keane’s proposal of civil society address, on the one hand, the consideration that civil society cannot be contemplated – as Keane so well explains – through a limited understanding of the space that defines it. On the other hand, I will argue that the principles associated with civil society need to be justified or explained, and in this task I consider the work of Habermas to be critical. In sum, through the theoretical dialogue between two fundamental contemporary democratic proposals, my objective is to explore in depth the implications that affect the definition of the space occupied by civil society, and the principles associated with it.

I therefore examine Habermas’s proposal for civil society from the perspective offered by Keane, and through an analysis centred on the mass media, which is
particularly relevant for both authors. In the present study, the mass media, which as businesses do not fit easily into Habermas’s confined view of civil society space, will be considered as an integral part of civil society. The mass media is also the basis for and a fundamental actor in Keane’s new monitory democracy model, grounded on the importance of civil society scrutiny of the activities of those in power. Keane’s broad understanding of civil society enables us to exploit the democratic possibilities offered by what he calls the *new media galaxy*.

Focusing on the work of Keane brings with it a new complication, since he is a contemporary author with a prolific output who, with a weather eye on today’s problems, is constantly extending his theoretical proposals. As a result, I have been obliged at times to work with manuscripts in order to keep up with the author’s most recent contributions, a process facilitated by his kind willingness and constant interest in the present research.

The dissertation consists of four sections, each of which is divided into various chapters. The aim of the first section is to provide a conceptual framework on the broad notion of civil society through a historical and systemic analysis of extant theoretical reflection. The numerous understandings of civil society and its enormous scope, both throughout history and today, have led me to approach this first section as an explanation of specific meanings and an introduction to some of the general components and main debates that have developed over recent years. This section also includes a conceptual map designed to provide some orientation on the subject.

As part of this objective, the first chapter aims to analyse the position of contemporary reflection on civil society within democratic theory, starting from the basis that each democratic model gives rise to its own understanding of civil society. For this reason, the analysis distinguishes between the most restrictive and the most extensive conceptions of democracy, examining the latter in greater depth with special reference to the proposals of authors such as Barber, Habermas and Keane. My analysis of Keane’s model of monitory democracy constitutes one of the cornerstones of the present dissertation. The models of participative, deliberative and monitory democracy are compared.

The second chapter provides a historical view of the way the concept of civil society was contemplated and interpreted in the period between its origins in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and its resurgence in the 1980s with the aim of providing a minimum basis on
which to understand the current models which, despite their numerous innovations, all refer back to the proposals and classic theories from the past.

Having outlined the basic evolution of the diverse interpretations of civil society, amongst which I examine the liberal, republican and Hegelian models, the third chapter presents a study of various synchronic analyses with the aim of introducing certain basic meanings of the varied contemporary perspectives of civil society. In this chapter I examine the most important debates among civil society thinkers revolving around meaning, principles, space and methodology, in order to demonstrate and problematise the polysemy of the concept.

In this first section, I aim to establish a minimum grounding on which to focus the broad current discussion on the meaning of civil society. The second section of the dissertation examines the position of civil society in Keane, through an analysis of this concept from his initial democratic proposal which I relate to his reflection on the state and the public sphere.

This section broadly follows the chronological evolution of Keane’s work. In this way, the work of the author can be understood as a whole, and the changes and innovations he introduces throughout his writings can be clearly seen. This methodology does not exclude the introduction, at certain points, of synchronic or comparative analyses of a range of notions put forward by the author.

Within this development, chapter four defines the meaning of the concept of civil society in Keane’s writings through an extended study that explains both the democratic model in which civil society is integrated, and the principles of freedom and equality related to the concept of civil society. The specific aim of this chapter is to study the definition of civil society proposed by Keane. To this end, the agents, space and principles that define the concept are analysed. This chapter also includes a specific study of the position held by the market in Keane’s civil society proposal, in order to more precisely define the delimitation of its space. Finally, the notion of civil society is not separate, nor can it be separated from the concept of the state. The chapter therefore ends with an explanation of the counterpart always present in Keane’s proposal: the role of the state as a guarantor framework for civil society.

However, this minimum framework defined in Keane’s earlier works is modified to some degree by the continuous growth of civil society, which leads the author to a new reflection on the role and meaning of the global civil society. Chapter five analyses this concept with a proposal to rethink the relationship between the state and civil
society within this global framework, and an attempt to understand the new meaning this notion adopts, and the global specificity it acquires. I thus attempt to show that the imbalances between civil society and the state that derive in the new global order lead to a series of new considerations in Keane’s proposal, one of the most outstanding of which is the role granted to a public sphere that acquires greater prominence, due to its perceived capacity to resolve certain problems that affect the global political system.

Having reviewed Keane’s proposal on the problematic of globalisation and the growth of issues that go beyond the regulating capacity of the nation-state, I attempt to examine the specific meaning of the notion of public sphere that, as mentioned above, seems to be taking on an increasing importance in the author’s writings. The public sphere, an ambivalent and polysemic concept, is analysed in such a way as to differentiate it from civil society and to explain its meaning and its relationship with the mass media, a fundamental player in the configuration of the public sphere.

Following this analysis of the concept of civil society in Keane together with the state and the public sphere, the third section of the dissertation explores the ethical dimension of civil society. Here I set out to analyse the principles associated with civil society and their accompanying justification. In sum, I attempt to shed light on why civil society is identified with some principles and not others, by exploring more deeply the level of ethical justification, and leaving until later in the dissertation its application to civil society actors, specifically the mass media.

The first chapter in this third section, is one of the central pillars of the dissertation as it attempts to explain Keane’s ethical perspective in relation to his proposal of civil society and democracy, based on the rejection of ideologies and what he calls Grand Ideals and First Principles. This perspective is explored in an attempt to show the possible problems linked to the lack of justification of the normative principles of civil society.

In order to counterbalance this possible shortcoming, chapter eight introduces Habermas’s critical approach. Thus, I examine the possibilities offered by this theory and, more specifically, by the theory of communicative action and discourse ethics to justify the basic principles that underlie civil society. I also argue that certain limitations of Habermas’s proposal concerning the applicability of theoretical reflection make it necessary to incorporate a critical perspective capable of combining the two elements, namely justification and application. Herein lies the role of the Valencian School.
Chapter nine then explores the political interpretation of Habermas’s philosophical proposal, and specifically his interpretation of civil society and the public sphere, together with their role within the model of deliberative democracy postulated as an integration and extension of the possibilities offered by the liberal and republican proposals of democracy. The purpose of this chapter is to understand Habermas’s notions of democracy, civil society and the public sphere, and to conceive the relation between them by looking specifically at the role of the mass media in this context. The central argument that I try to develop in this chapter is that the restricted understanding of civil society in terms of its defining space, which excludes the market and the state, may be interpreted as problematic when tackling certain questions, and at the same time, limits the potential possibilities opened up by what Keane calls the new media galaxy. Although this galaxy is grounded on a corporate structure, it cannot be exclusively identified with the logic of strategy that Habermas attributes to the systemic ambit of the economy, nor should the power or the transforming capacity that potentially accompany it be scorned.

Thus, I attempt to explain the theoretical dialogue between Habermas and Keane as mutually complementary, in which the justification of the normative principles of civil society may be added to the broad understanding of its space. The first question allows us to discover the critical horizon and the second, to examine the transforming potential of civil society actors, which include such major economic actors as the mass media.

Finally, the fourth section sets out to study the theoretical possibilities presented by this aggregated definition of civil society within Keane’s new proposal of monitory democracy. This new proposal within democratic theory analyses, through historical interpretation, the strengthening of civil society as a consequence of the proliferation of a series of monitoring agents from 1945 onwards. In Keane’s view, representative democracy has been overtaken by the transformation of the political process that is no longer exclusively defined by governments, political parties and parliaments. Civil society and its capacity to act in the public sphere have put a stop to the soliloquy of traditional political mechanisms, and have done so, in part, with the support of an unprecedented media scenario.

To move towards a deeper understanding of Keane’s most recent proposal, chapter ten explores the notion of this new form of monitory democracy, how it differs from representative democracy, its characteristic way of functioning, the ethos of
communicative abundance that defines it, and the reasons why it arose. This proposal is understood in relation to other models of democracy, specifically polyarchy, embedded, participative, deliberative and counter democracy, to explore the definition of the political process put forward in the monitory model and the singularity of this model.

The political process of monitory democracy, how political order is shaped, is explained by the strengthening of the counter-power of civil society, by the capacity to extend the process of scrutinising power holders across the whole spectrum of society. This chapter analyses how monitory democracy observes the changes that occur in power relations as a result of the expansion of new mechanisms and new tendencies that encourage the growth of civil society’s influence and, in sum, the modification of how the decision-making process occurs, a process that is open to constant interference from outside.

A correct understanding of monitory democracy requires it to be differentiated from certain other democratic models, a study in which it is argued that although this model requires a greater capacity for action from civil society than the polyarchal and embedded models, it is not subject to the high demands of participative democracy. The thesis centres on distinguishing between monitoring and participation and argues that the former is one possible form of participation among many, exercised *a posteriori* and that does not include all connotations of participation, but is highly capable of fitting into today’s information societies, since monitoring multiplies and expands by way of the new media.

To this end, as well as the essential definition of the political process of this monitored form of democracy, I attempt to examine the causes that gave rise to its emergence, and specifically the central role played by the consolidation of a new media galaxy to strengthen civil society. Chapter eleven aims to define the terms which characterise this galaxy, and specifically the role of two key aspects of its definition; on the one hand, Internet as the medium *par excellence* of the new era of communicative abundance; and on the other the consolidation of the *global media* as global actors with increasing influence and capacity. Both aspects are studied with the aim of analysing the most innovative characteristics of monitory democracy, and thus also allow the introduction of media deficiencies that restrict the most favourable aspects of this democratic model. These deficiencies may essentially be classified in four types: the threats of information overload, communication inequalities, media concentration and a journalistic structure based on the pursuit of quick profits and lack of rigour.
This final section attempts to demonstrate the importance of considering the mass media in relation to its integration as an agent of civil society, and of recognising the value in themselves of the structures that make up the media; media that although in need of state regulation, also urgently requires an ethical orientation in order to develop in a deregulated global context.

The normative proposal developed in the final chapter is intended to offer a model of civil society that considers that its functionality cannot be understood only as a counter-power to the state, but also as a space capable of solving, on its own and autonomously, certain problems that affect its structure and its logic. Hence, in the specific problematic of the mass media I argue that some self-regulation mechanisms from civil society may be used to palliate certain aspects of media decadence, particularly concerning journalistic bad practice and the following of exclusively market based criteria.

Civil society is contemplated, therefore, as a space with its own values and resources, which as well as being able to alter power relations with regard to the state, also has the potential to improve its own structures, logic and dynamics and, in summary, use its own resources. Thus, to the outstanding reflections of Keane and Habermas on civil society grounded on an understanding of civil society centred on its relationship to the state, as a backbone of democratising counterforce, we can add an analysis centred on civil society’s own possibilities of transforming its own structures and logic, and of solving specific problems that arise in a global context. Civil society is understood, in the end, as an agent capable of democratising both the state and its own space through its own mechanisms, which, in the case of the mass media, are represented by systems of self-regulation.
CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this dissertation has been to exhaustively analyse the concept of civil society in the work of Keane. The study has demonstrated the potentiality of his civil society proposal, understood in the broad definition of its space and actors, in which the author highlights the central role of the media in his monitory democracy model; a model constituted as a result of the increasing counter-power acquired by a civil society that is consolidated, in part, by the opportunities presented by the new media galaxy.

The study of civil society as proposed in the work of Keane has demonstrated a need to explain the institutional conditions that underlie the concept of civil society, such as the state and the public sphere, together with the problems arising from the relations between them. At the same time, the proposal for a global civil society responds to the need to explain the possibilities and limitations offered by growing global interrelationships. The dissertation has attempted to show that this global civil society proposal remains incomplete if it does not respond to the justification of the principles that define it. For this reason, I have established a theoretical dialogue with Habermas, and included the interpretation of discourse ethics presented by the Valencia School.

The first section has demonstrated the central position held by the definition of civil society principles and the delimitation of its space. Here, I have analysed the pre-eminent role that reflection on the concept has acquired in current democratic theories, and examined some past and present debates on its meaning. The first chapter has noted how the thick democratic theories, “participative”, “deliberative” and “monitory”, although they differ in their definition of the political process, coincide in placing civil society centre stage to attain a model of democracy that goes beyond the thin understandings of democracy, limited to defining a selection process for political elites. However, the problem lies in how to understand the meaning of the polysemic concept of civil society.

In a second stage, I have observed how the polysemy of the concept has its roots in its historical interpretations. I have shown, very briefly, how the term is used as civilised social order (Locke and Ferguson); as a form of associational life
(Tocqueville); as the progress of rational connection linked to economic development not unrelated to the advance of inequality (Hegel); or as a type of economics that determines the bourgeois architecture of the state (Marx). This historical overview is fundamental since it influences contemporary debates on the term, which reappears in political theory in the 1980s. However, in the present study I have argued that although civil society continues to be understood by certain authors—Gellner, Perez Díaz, Shils—as a *civilised social order*, the predominant understandings today are closer to a neo-Tocquevillian vision of civil society as a *social sphere* operating within the democratic system. Thus, civil society is defined as an actor that operates with its own logic, unlike that of the state, even though it is the state that provides the framework in which its existence is guaranteed. Civil society is defined as an actor that, with its own functionality, acts alongside the state and is decisive in ensuring a healthy democratic system. One of the central aims of this dissertation has been to encounter this functionality.

However, as we have seen, this understanding of civil society as a social sphere takes on different connotations and demands answers to various key questions. On the one hand, which actors are included and which are left outside its space? And on the other, if civil society is defined according to a certain set of actors, what principles and values characterise and differentiate its space?

The range of contemporary interpretations of civil society put forward by Keane, Habermas, Walzer, Barber, Cohen, Arato, Kaldor, Anherier, Salamon, Norris, Chambers, Warren, Dekker, Diamond, Philips, among many others, provide different answers to these questions, although certain common aspects can be appreciated. First, in relation to civil society space, the debate revolves around whether or not the family and the market should be included. Second, among the various principles associated with civil society, two appear to meet with general acceptance: the principle of *wilfulness*, understood as voluntary and self-organised action by civil society actors, and *pluralism*, a concept reconstructed by Chambers and Kopstein to explain the idea of reciprocity understood as the acceptance of different lifestyles.

Having set out this conceptual map and identified the extent of polysemy in the civil society concept, the present study then explored Keane’s reflection on civil society, as one of the authors to have worked most systematically on the concept. The present
Conclusions

analysis has demonstrated the potentiality of Keane’s proposal within democratic reflection. Keane’s earliest interpretations of civil society, still focused within the nation-state framework, paid particular attention to the capacity of civil society actors to avoid the concentrations of power that threaten all democratic pluralism. The rebalancing of power between state and society actors emerged as a necessary strategy to avoid a repetition of the disasters of the 20th century.

In this vein, I have shown how Keane proposes this balance not only with regard to the importance of the role played by civil society actors, but also to the state as an essential framework to guarantee both the democratic system, and the existence of civil society itself. Keane shows how reflection on civil society is inseparable from the state, and how both are key actors in avoiding the dangerous accumulation of power in all manner of centres. However, we have also seen how this initial perspective advanced in Democracy and civil society (1988) and Civil society: Old visions, new images (1998), is modified with the arrival of the globalisation process and what has come to be known as the global civil society. Fully aware of this process, Keane has remained critical and attentive by incorporating innovations that affect global civil society and reflecting on a key problematic of this new phenomenon: the constitution of the global civil society in the absence of a global state. Hence, in Global civil society? (2003) Keane outlines the new dimension and characteristics acquired by the now global civil society, and its capacity to extend its democratising impact at a level that goes beyond nation-state borders.

Faced with this new situation, we have seen how in addition to the need to reflect on the legal organisms appropriate to a global level, the public sphere acquires increasing importance in Keane’s democratic proposal. The process of globalisation, accompanied by a growing series of problems such as increased conflicts, escalating inequality and the proliferation of arrogant ideologies, is at the same time linked to a greater attribution of the possibilities of the public sphere, understood as a space in which conflicts can potentially be resolved non-violently and where power relations can be questioned. The development of the mass media on a global scale and the birth of Internet increase this possibility, and their consequences are analysed in the new concept of monitory democracy, in which civil society and the public sphere take on a preeminent role in the definition of the political process.
Conclusions

Before analysing this democratic proposal in the final section of the dissertation, I turned to a central aspect of this research: the relationship between ethics and civil society in Keane’s writings. I have attempted to show how the limited attention Keane pays to justifying the principles associated with civil society is somewhat problematic. His model of civil society based on the methodology of ideal types refutes the possibility and the need for any justification of the principles of civil society. The grounding of values, whatever the path taken to do so, and despite the fact that Keane himself identifies civil society with the principles of non-violence, pluralism and self-reflection, he considers as a proposal that leads towards monism, and towards the Grand Ideals that go against the encouragement or consolidation of social pluralism.

Yet Keane does not hesitate to defend democracy as a universal precondition for the consolidation of pluralism. He goes so far as to state that the ideal of democracy and civil society constitute a universal precondition for the open acceptance of difference, a categorical – not hypothetical – need to be able to live in a plural society where mutual respect exists and conflicts are resolved non-violently. The author’s refusal to justify the principles of democracy and civil society and his continued defence of pluralism, non-violence and resolute respect for difference has been considered in this dissertation as problematic, since Keane in fact negates what he actually does: justify his model of democracy and civil society. I have argued that there appears to be a certain confusion between fundamentalism and philosophical grounding; there seems to be no appreciation of the clear difference between a process of grounding, based on well-articulated reasons to clarify why some values are preferred to others, and fundamentalism which calls for unconditional adhesion to arbitrary and all-embracing principles based on fanaticism. I also conclude that ethics and politics, and their meanings, appear to merge in Keane’s reflection, since the author considers ethics to be guaranteed by the institutional framework of civil society, and later by democracy, and therefore he does not attribute the definition of what should be to ethics, thus leaving politics with no central point by which to orientate its delimitation of what is possible.

For this reason, in this dissertation I have attempted to complement Keane’s proposal at the level of justifying the principles of civil society with Habermas’s reflections on the theory of communicative action and discourse ethics. I have argued that the conditions for discourse are capable of reconstructing the normative principles.
that underlie civil society, specifically, pluralism, inclusion and non violence. Habermas’s reconstruction of language and understanding, which are precisely what define and structure the actions of civil society, therefore allow the underlying principles of civil society to be justified. These values serve both as a critical principle and as a possible horizon for action that, although difficult to achieve in reality, is at least useful to guide action on defining the normative stage, in other words, what should be, that which gives meaning to what actually exists.

From this reconstruction of the principles of civil society, I do not attempt to establish a catalogue imposed from an arbitrary or monist approach, as Keane may perhaps think, but rather I set out to define a framework capable of guaranteeing precisely the principles of pluralism and mutual respect that Keane defends. In this way, the consolidation of the principles of pluralism, inclusion and non violence serve as a normative criterion to guide the actors of civil society and to guarantee the free participation and acceptance of the decisions taken by the actors affected by a norm. In reality, these are principles presupposed and demanded by the very actors of civil society; their raison d'être is explained by these demands, which are simply that their action be recognised. By moving away from these principles a civil society actor brings into question its inclusion in the space of civil society, or its identification as a “bad” agent of civil society.

I consider this attempt to clarify the principles associated with civil society to be a key factor in the current debate. It should be remembered that one of the main criticisms of sceptical approaches addresses the lack of clarity of the principles or criteria that explain the character of civil society and that enable us to distinguish agents that form part of it from those that do not; or to know which agents do not comply with the principles that are commonly attributed to it. In this vein, Chandhoke points to a certain confusion between the various proposals of civil society when defining the principles that delimit its space, in other words when defining a clear criterion that allows us to know when an agent of civil society complies with the attributions it is presupposed to have. Chandhoke considers that the various theories of civil society are not capable of explaining clearly whether a religious association that does not satisfy the principles of free will or pluralism forms part of civil society or not, and similarly, that
they do not define the moment in which a sphere of civil society meets the required principles and conditions.

However, the justification of the principles that underlie civil society, and specifically the principles of non violence, inclusion and pluralism postulated in the present study as normative principles of civil society, allow us to tackle the problem of lack of definition of civil society. Taking an ethics perspective to delimit and justify the principles of civil society enables us to define both its character and nature, and the space it occupies. It is therefore possible to consider that when an actor moves away from the normative principles of civil society, it forms part of what, following Kopstein and Chambers, is considered to be a “bad” civil society, while a move towards the ideal conditions allows it to be considered a “good” agent of civil society.

Having examined the question of the principles that define civil society, I then turned to the political interpretation of Habermas’s philosophical proposal by analysing the model of deliberative democracy and civil society’s role in it. The examination of the civil society proposal in Habermas opens the way to the second central question in the present reflection on civil society: the delimitation of the space it occupies. In my view, Habermas’s delimitation of civil society, as an associative space that excludes the state and the market, is insufficient. In the present dissertation I have shown how this limited view of civil society space, followed by other thinkers such as Cohen, Arato, Barber and Kaldor, among many others, is problematic in various ways.

I have therefore attempted to complement the view of civil society put forward by Habermas using the critique of Keane, who advocates a wider, non-purist understanding of the space of civil society. In addition to Keane’s criticisms, the contributions of Sitton, Kellner, Dekker, Cortina and García Marzá are also considered to be crucial to understanding the importance of a broad definition of civil society that includes the economy. I have adopted this broad-based position for various reasons: to avoid the situation in which economic actors remain beyond criticism; to recognise that the improvement mechanisms in this sector cannot come exclusively from the state; to explain the importance of the economic sector in which a vast amount of social relations are produced and reproduced; and in order to recognise how these actors might be transformed.
Hence, I have considered that NGOs, social movements and citizens associations must be considered as an integral part of civil society, on the same footing as universities, hospitals or companies. My main concern in this sense focuses on the role of and the position occupied by the mass media as a key actor in civil society and global civil society.

The dissertation shows how the mass media has become particularly important in Habermas’s reflection, regarded as the backbone of the public sphere, and has also played a key role in the centre-periphery communication process and the necessary inverse process for the rationalisation of the political process. However, as Kellner’s critique has shown, the interpretation of civil society as a non-economic and non-state association space leaves the mass media, as businesses, in an uncomfortable position and negates any process of democratic transformation of the mass media, a project that Habermas himself considered as a possible and desirable objective in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. In addition, in his more recent reflection on the mass media in *Ach, Europa. Kleine Politische Schriften XI*, his expectations and centre of analysis continue to be anchored in the press as the media *par excellence* for the shaping of a critical public sphere. Thus, Habermas not only keeps the mass media outside his model of civil society, but he also fails to appreciate, in contrast to Keane, the huge potential offered in the new media arena.

For this reason, I have considered the theoretical dialogue between Keane and Habermas as mutually complementary. Thus, to the justification of the principles that underlie Habermas’s discourse theory, I have added the broad understanding of the space of civil society put forward by Keane, with particular attention to the new media galaxy to strengthen the action of civil society within the new monitory democracy model. Once again, I explore the relationship between the justification of principles and the delimitation of space.

Keane’s monitory democracy proposal is innovative in the way it looks at the possibilities offered by the current media scenario to strengthen the action of civil society through the public sphere. In this line, the author observes in his most recent book *The life and death of democracy* (2009), how democracy is taking on a new form as a result of the multiplication of monitory bodies that, able to examine power from outside parliament, change the habitual structure of representative democracy. The
Conclusions

central role of political parties, elections and parliament, although remaining essential, lose certain ground to civil society. The how, who and what of the political process is altered in part as a result of innovations in the realm of communication, which has not only changed the way citizens communicate amongst themselves, but also within the democratic system as a whole.

Thus, referring to who influences and participates in the political process, we observe a greater capacity of the represented to act on the representatives; in the what, we observe a greater willingness to multiply the opinions and interests that are expressed and discussed publicly; and finally in how the democratic political process is effectuated, we can see the growing importance of monitoring, a way of critically observing the activity of those who hold power. I have attempted to argue the relevance of distinguishing the action of monitoring from other actions, such as participation, which is the central political process of participationist models.

Monitoring is understood, therefore, as the scrutiny of the activity of power-holding actors and as an action that requires the monitory actors to be involved in the follow-up proces, but which must be understood as one possible way of participating among many others. Monitoring represents a form of participation that does not require direct decision making with others in order to construct a common will. Monitory action is not defined as an a priori to the final decision to emerge from the process of deliberation, but rather as an action to follow a decision already taken, an a posteriori act that examines how correct a process or decision is.

Keane’s defence of monitoring is essential to the present research, as an action that can encourage the democratisation of a political system in complex societies. I also believe the author is right when he observes that the new media galaxy has altered the form of interaction between citizens, civil societies and entire government systems, in that many more voices are now heard and the centre-periphery communication flows have diversified. Thus, members of the mass media have not only become specific agents of civil society, but they also represent an essential component in achieving the ideal of monitory democracy, in other words, that every power holder can be the subject of permanent public scrutiny by civil society and citizens.

One possible problem attributed to this new model of monitory democracy is the lack of distinction at the normative level of the proposal. In other words, Keane
interprets this process as a historic occurrence, not without problems and contradictions, but consolidated as a reality across the political spectrum. However, it is not difficult to discern the highly normative character of this type of democracy, which symbolises the strength of civil society in controlling the centres of accumulated power, on which the author has so extensively theorised in his previous writings.

Indeed, Keane himself has suggested a set of real threats that affect the ideal of monitory democracy, amongst which the problems associated with media decadence are particularly relevant. The new media galaxy, as Keane refers to it, presents a series of basic innovations such as the emergence of the Internet and the expansion of the global media, and amongst the possibilities and limitations they offer the democratic system there is no shortage of enthusiast approaches – for example Barlow’s Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace – and more sceptical perspectives – as Sunstein’s Republicanism 2.0 – discussed in the dissertation. Keane argues the importance of not falling in with either of the two tendencies: neither negating the totally innovative possibilities offered by the new media scenario, nor ignoring certain current deficiencies that affect it such as the threat of information overload, communication inequality, media concentration and a journalistic structure based on pursuit of quick profits and without rigour.

However, although his broad model of civil society opens up the possibility of transformation for media actors, Keane does not update the normative media model developed previously in Media and democracy (1991) to tackle these problems in the media arena. The monitory democracy model based on the new media galaxy is (still) not accompanied by a normative media model that would face up to the problems affecting it.

In summary, in this dissertation I have attempted to demonstrate that Keane’s concept of global civil society is key to the broad understanding of civil society space, to the observation of its democratising possibilities, and to its capacity to extend the meaning of the political process far beyond simple participation in the electoral process. Nonetheless, his neglect of justification leads me to complement this proposal with the ethical perspective of Habermas. An ethics, it should be remembered, equally concerned with justification as with application. This complementation therefore allows us to
define and justify a concept of civil society that can explain the potentialities of transformation.

In order to demonstrate the potential fruitfulness of the concept of civil society provided by this complementation, my study concludes with a proposal designed to improve the structure of the mass media and civil society institutions by means of García Marzá’s concept of moral resources. This model attaches importance to both the broad understanding of civil society space, a line close to Keane, and the justification of the principles that define it, in this case following Habermas. But what is new about this proposal lies in the fact that it does not stop with an ethics of justification, but that it defends the importance of carrying this justification through to the level of ethical application. It allows us to examine the possibilities of extending this level to the praxis of different spheres of civil society with the aim of identifying and exploiting the moral resources that belong to that space.

As I have attempted to show, the most outstanding aspect of this interpretation lies in its particular attention to the intrinsic value of the institutions of civil society. The radical conception of García Marzá’s proposal is understood precisely in this sense, by considering that the value of civil society is not limited to its function as a “counterweight” to the state, or as a shaper of opinions inside the public sphere, since it understands that issues, problems and conflicts can be resolved within civil society itself, through its logic and its structure, by following the moral principle that demands the participation of all those affected. In this way, the participation of affected actors is not limited to a possible influence on state institutions that *a posteriori*, regulate the institutions of civil society; rather it is understood from within each sphere, where citizens as workers, parents, neighbours or journalists can deliberate and decide on issues that concern them and autonomously solve the problems that affect them.

Taking an integrating approach to civil society I have considered that each of its component spheres possesses an intrinsic value, ethical capital and moral resources that can be promoted by their own mechanisms. I interpret this proposal, centred on the possibility of the internal transformation of its own structures, as capable of offering new orientations and facing the specific problems associated with journalistic structures that operate in an increasingly global and deregulated environment.
Conclusions

A proposal of civil society centred on the possibility of internal transformation in its structures has been interpreted as capable of offering new possibilities, specifically in tackling the problematic of a journalistic structure based on the pursuit of quick profits. The attainment of the internal good of the mass media linked to the production and diffusion of information is therefore approached through mechanisms of self-regulation, voluntary devices capable of guiding action and meeting the demands placed by society and that determine the legitimacy of their activity. Amongst these mechanisms, I have argued that the creation of codes of ethics as an introduction to the institution and a statement of its commitment, and auditing as a mechanism of control and evaluation are good approaches to self-regulation that sets out to improve media activity. This proposal may be strengthened by Keane’s monitoring process.

The conclusion I have drawn is that current reflection on civil society cannot be understood only in relation to the state; it must also look at its own structures and dynamics to enable the democratising process to spread in both directions, by recognising not only civil society’s capacity to demand improvements in state institutions, but also improvements to its own ways of working, and to activate the moral resources it possesses through voluntary mechanisms such as self-regulation. Only in this way are we able to recognise that the spheres of civil society acquire a value by and for themselves.
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