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El derecho humano a participar y su conexión con la inteligencia artificial

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Summary: Introduction. 1. The right to participate as a human right. 2. Linking the development of technology to political participation in democracy. 3. A future perspective on artificial intelligence and its democratic impact. Conclusions. References.

Abstract: This article analyses the right to participate in democracy as a human right and its link to the development and implementation of artificial intelligence. First, it explores the fundamental aspect of the right to participate as a human right in the democratic framework, reflecting on its importance and its basic function of generating open spaces for the debate and presentation of other rights, highlighting that political participation generates a pull effect on other rights as citizens are in a favourable position for the defence and recognition of their rights. Next, emphasis is placed on the role of emerging technologies in facilitating and enhancing democratic engagement, bearing in mind that technological development has a direct influence on all aspects of people's lives, so that democracy in general, and each society's methods of organisation in particular, are also affected. Finally, a significant part of the discussion revolves around the future perspective of artificial intelligence and its potential impact on democracy, exploring both favourable developments and potential challenges. Artificial intelligence will undoubtedly continue to conquer more spheres of human endeavour, so it is worth reflecting on the importance of adapting this new technology to the future of democracies, while respecting its essential elements and guaranteeing citizens' fundamental rights. Finally, the article concludes by summarising the main

ideas and implications, underlining the critical importance of safeguarding democratic principles in the midst of technological advances.

Keywords: participation, artificial intelligence, human rights, democracy, politics.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza el derecho a participar en democracia como derecho humano y su vinculación con el desarrollo e implementación de la inteligencia artificial. En primer lugar, se profundiza en el aspecto fundamental del derecho a participar como derecho humano en el marco democrático, reflexionando sobre la importancia del mismo y su función básica de generar espacios abiertos al debate y presentación de otros derechos, destacando que la participación política genera un efecto de atracción sobre otros derechos al estar la ciudadanía en posición favorable para la defensa y reconocimiento de sus derechos. A continuación, se hace hincapié en el papel de las tecnologías emergentes a la hora de facilitar y mejorar el compromiso democrático, teniendo en cuenta que el desarrollo tecnológico tiene una influencia directa en todos los órdenes de la vida de las personas, de manera que la democracia en general, y los métodos de organización de cada sociedad en particular, se ven también afectados. Por último, una parte significativa de la discusión gira en torno a la perspectiva futura de la inteligencia artificial y su impacto potencial en la democracia, explorando tanto los avances favorables como los desafíos potenciales. Sin duda la inteligencia artificial va a seguir conquistando más esferas de actuación humanas por lo que cabe reflexionar sobre la importancia de adaptar esta nueva tecnología al porvenir de las democracias, respetando sus elementos esenciales y garantizando los derechos fundamentales de los ciudadanos. Por último, el artículo concluye resumiendo las principales ideas e implicaciones, subrayando la importancia crítica de salvaguardar los principios democráticos en medio de los avances tecnológicos.

Palabras clave: participación, inteligencia artificial, derechos humanos, democracia, política.

Introduction[1]

The fundamental right to political participation, in addition to being a human right enshrined in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, shows that we are dealing with a basic right that belongs to every human being by virtue of the fact that they are human beings, and which, in turn, favours the possibility of generating democratic structures wherever there is a society that can organise itself as such (Castellanos 2020). It is a right that has been widely studied, both in doctrinal and jurisprudential terms (Ruiz Robledo 2018), which highlights its importance and relevance.

This is an irreplaceable element of any democratic scenario. Citizens must participate in public affairs and, as a consequence, democracy is permanently reasserting itself. Any hint of shadow or suspicion about this basic principle, any element that disturbs the general awareness that citizens participate in public affairs, has dire consequences. Recall President Trump's statements describing the election in which President Biden defeated him as "the greatest election fraud in history", provoking a riot and subsequent violent occupation of the Capitol that led to the loss of four lives and dozens of injuries. If just a few statements by the losing candidate could have led to those tragic incidents of January 2021, what could not happen if, on the occasion of introducing technological mechanisms in the development of the elections, the electronic voting could have been manipulated by the influence of some technological error or the incidence of artificial intelligence in defining the results (Castellanos 2024, 276-277).

It is therefore essential to reflect on how the basic foundations of democracy, citizen participation in the democratic arena, are affected by the technological elements that are gradually being introduced into the day-to-day life of citizens. Thus, although it is possible to state that the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the democratic sphere

can have both positive and negative aspects, it is important to consider both sides of the coin. On the one hand, disruptive technologies, and specifically AI, could help improve the efficiency and transparency of democratic processes by using technologies to analyse large datasets to identify patterns and trends in voter preferences, as well as by employing *chatbots* and voice recognition systems to facilitate access to information and public services. However, there is also the potential for the incorporation of AI in the democratic sphere to raise concerns about confidentiality, protection and manipulation of information. For example, the use of AI technologies to collect and analyse personal data could compromise the privacy of individuals, while the influence of AI on political decisions could undermine the integrity and fairness of democratic processes.

Hence, the main reflection that we will address in this article should be about an adaptation of artificial intelligence that is harmonious with human reality. Because technological progress is as uncontroversial as it is debatable whether the insertion of artificial intelligence in all areas of life does not entail an associated risk.

1. **The right to participate as a human right**

Citizen participation in the political, social and economic affairs of a society is fundamental to the full exercise of democracy and respect for human rights. This principle, enshrined in numerous international human rights instruments, establishes that all individuals have an inherent right to participate in making decisions that affect their lives and communities. In this context, the right to participate stands as one of the fundamental pillars of a just and equitable society.

As we have noted, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, proclaims in article 21 the right of everyone to take part in the government of his or her country either directly or through freely chosen representatives. This right is complemented by other international instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognise and protect participation as an essential component of human dignity and the realisation of other fundamental rights (Viciano and González 2014).

Citizen participation manifests itself in a variety of ways, ranging from voting in democratic elections to participating in peaceful protests, expressing opinions in the media and social networks, and

collaborating in civil society organisations. These practices not only strengthen the legitimacy of democratic institutions, but also empower individuals and foster a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the community.

However, despite the recognised importance of participation as a human right, there are numerous obstacles that can hinder its full exercise. These include discrimination, exclusion, political repression and lack of access to the information and resources necessary to participate meaningfully in public life. It is therefore the responsibility of states and the international community to ensure that the participatory rights of all individuals, especially historically marginalised or vulnerable groups, are respected and protected. Algorithms are created by people, who, either intentionally or unconsciously, may incorporate biases and stereotypes they hold about certain social groups into the systems they develop (Soriano 2021, 92). Moreover, to all these traditional elements affecting citizens' participation in public affairs must be added those associated with certain technological developments, notably the irruption of artificial intelligence in all spheres of people's lives, including, of course, in their political dimension.

It is undeniable that citizen participation is a fundamental pillar of any democratic political system. In democracy, crucial decisions affecting life in society are taken by citizens, either directly or through representatives. However, between these two options, the latter seems to be preferable. The representative democracy model, in which citizens elect a small group of representatives to debate and vote on behalf of the population, is more viable and effective than the direct democracy model, in which all decisions are subject to the constant scrutiny of the citizenry. Of course, the latter system would be practically unfeasible in large communities. And this is corroborated by the fact that this is an idea that is well established in the democratic imaginary of societies, but that emerging technologies are leading to the elimination of many physical and administrative barriers has brought it back into the debate (Sánchez 2006). Why not use technology to establish a daily plebiscite? Why not use technology to advance the democratic conception of societies? Of course, the use of technology could lead to democratic improvement in terms of expanding the possibilities for direct citizen participation (Ackerley 2017; López Rubio 2023; Álvarez and de Montalvo 2011).

In any case, in addition to practical issues, there are other substantive reasons for representative democracy, as this model encourages political decisions to be made in the general interest, rather

than for particular interests. Representatives are obliged to publicly justify their positions, which contributes to safeguarding the common good. In this context, electoral participation emerges as the main channel through which citizens intervene in public affairs, so that the election of representatives is the cornerstone of legitimisation of the political decisions they take. In this regard, it is important to highlight this premise in order not to lose sight of the fact that other mechanisms of participation should be seen as complementary to, but never as substitutes for, participation in the electoral process.

Moreover, the recognition of the right to participate in public affairs, generally conveyed through free elections in open and transparent democratic processes, implies the democratic consecration of any self-respecting society. We underline this point because when we deal with technological insertion in the democratic space and, therefore, its influence on citizens' political participation, we will be dealing with the integration of technological novelties in the public arena or of human incidence by definition. In this sense, the public space and citizen interrelation to discuss and debate public affairs is the place par excellence where the conception of man as a citizen, as an integral element of society, is embodied. This is not just a technological improvement, which is important in terms of improving the quality of life, as there are many, but rather it has an impact on the most essential part of the reality of citizenship. In terms of participation and recognition of rights, not only in their political conception, but also as a human right, the degree of democratic progress of any society is measured and founded. This is the reason why we advocate a serious and profound reflection in this work by not frivolously observing the possibility that artificial intelligence in particular, and disruptive technologies in general, may distort the very democratic conception that recognises the right to participate as a human right.

In short, the right to participate is an essential component of democracy and human rights, ensuring that all people could contribute to the development of their societies and to influence the decisions that affect their lives. Promoting and protecting this right is fundamental to building more just, inclusive and democratic societies. In this regard, the United Nations General Assembly has expressed itself through the approval in 2015 of the so-called 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by virtue of which the Member States committed themselves to the achievement of 17 goals (Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs), including SDG16 "Peace, justice and strong institutions". This goal includes among its targets to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making

at all levels (SDG 16.7), as well as to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national laws and international agreements (SDG 16.10). As the SDG slogan "leave no one behind" states, opening up the world also means opening up decision-making to citizens, generating more participatory societies and more open institutions (Montero 2022).

2. Linking the development of technology to political participation in democracy

We have noted above that the human right to participate is, for the most part, realised through electoral processes. In this regard, we note that, in 2024, we are witnessing a historic milestone: more than 60 countries around the world hold national elections[2], making it the largest election year in history. However, this massive election period is marked by growing concerns about the role of social media and artificial intelligence in shaping public debate and democratic integrity. In particular, platforms such as *Meta*, with its 3 billion users on *WhatsApp*, *Instagram* and *Facebook*, are at the centre of attention because of their power to shape the information ecosystem globally.

In this sense, concerns about election-related disinformation and violence have led activists, legislators and journalists to sound the alarm bells (Carrillo 2022). This is not a fictitious concern; there is indeed a risk of undue influence on democratic processes through the pernicious use of social media. However, many platforms are changing their teams responsible for maintaining social media security, raising questions about their ability to address these issues effectively.

There have been previous examples that have shown that the influence of technology on democratic processes is, at the very least, something to reflect on. For example, in 2016, *Meta* became the focus of attention for its alleged role in the rise of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States. And while the company invested in new tools and processes to combat disinformation during the 2020 presidential election, subsequent reports revealed that groups such as "Stop the Steal" continued to grow in the weeks following the election, questioning the legitimacy of Joe Biden's victory. This lack of

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[2] In addition to the European Parliament elections scheduled for 9 June, many countries will be called to the polls in 2024, accounting for more than half of the world's population. These countries include, for example, the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, Russia and Mexico, among others.

effective action by *Meta* has been criticised, especially after events such as the Capitol Hill riot of 6 January 2021. And this is not an isolated case since, in Brazil, the attack by Bolsonaro supporters on government buildings on 8 January 2023 was also fuelled by the communication of audios and disinformation via *WhatsApp* and *Telegram*. As we can see, "disinformation can have serious consequences for democracies and national and international security, and in today's digital age the main place where it originates and spreads is in the virtual environment" (Montero 2023, 69). It is therefore not surprising that both the EU and national governments, including Spain, have focused in recent years on combating disinformation, with the approval of the Digital Services Act (DSA) in the EU and the Spanish government's National Security Strategy 2021, for example, standing out.

Also relevant are the case of the Philippines, where *Meta* facilitated the rise of former president Rodrigo Duterte by allowing *trolls* attacking the opposition to flourish (Ragragio 2021), and the case of Sri Lanka, where the platform allowed the promotion of content marked as false and inciting violence. These examples illustrate the global challenges faced by social media in protecting democratic integrity.

Therefore, we want to put on the table for debate the importance that the enshrinement of technological influence on voters' decisions can have in electoral processes. The case of Slovakia, with the manipulation of audios through artificial intelligence that could affect the voting in 2023, has already put many democracies in Europe on notice, so the control of technological cleanliness in the electoral scenario will be a key point for the maintenance of confidence in electoral processes.

In any case, the electoral manipulation of voters or even the possibility of generating situations in which the veracity of the results is in doubt are important problems, but not the only ones if we take into account the weight of new technologies in democratic spaces. Thus, other relevant problems in this field are determined by the tribalisation of politics in social networks. By political tribalisation in social networks we refer to the phenomenon in which users group together in virtual communities based on their ideological affinities, creating echo chambers (Pariser 2011) where opinions are constantly reinforced. It is quite evident that this can lead to polarisation and the rejection of opposing views, making dialogue and the search for common solutions difficult. Moreover, it is paradoxical that the confluence of increased channels of communication between human beings does not naturally bring diverse positions closer together, but rather clusters similar conceptions and erects impenetrable barriers to other ideas.

Election campaigns have become real information wars whose main stage is the social networks. In these battles, the victory does not lie with the best arguments, but with the most intelligent algorithms. This information war, which even encourages the spread of fake news with the aim of convincing the electorate to vote for a particular political option, is what Han has called 'infocracy' (Han 2022, 25).

This situation has been brought about by the development of emerging technologies, particularly because of the rise of social networks (Balaguer 2023). These tools, used appropriately, imply a better and greater encounter between citizens and their ideas, but, unfortunately, this is not only the case in this direction. Hence, we highlight tribalisation as an element to counteract the advance of technology and its political influence. Thus, arguing against this trend involves highlighting the importance of intercultural dialogue and empathy in overcoming the divisions created by tribalisation. These are elements to work on because the ideal democratic scenario is one in which a collective space is generated in which all contributions have a place and citizens are not excluded on the basis of their ideas. In particular, social networks have the technical potential to be able to establish this in our democracies, which is why it will be necessary to establish guidelines for action to avoid hatred and confrontation through the networks. Otherwise the distance between those who think differently will grow, as will this phenomenon of tribalisation.

Another noteworthy aspect relates to the multiplication of opinions and its link to what could be described as an intense democracy. Thus, while the multiplication of opinions can be seen as a positive aspect of digital democracy, where more voices have the opportunity to express themselves, this does not automatically guarantee a more intense or participatory democracy. In many cases, the overabundance of information can lead to confusion and scepticism, especially if the quality of opinions is low or if misinformation is spread. Here it is worth reflecting on a controversial aspect: whether to encourage the presence of all opinions on an equal footing or to consider that, while no one can be silenced in a democratic setting, not all opinions should be on an equal footing. Opinions based on prejudice, disqualifications, a complete lack of rigour or even outright lies should not be accorded the same level of respect as those freely expressed by other citizens. It is complicated to fit in because, unconsciously, silencing opinions implies a certain anti-democratic game. Hence, democratic pedagogy itself implies visualising that the necessity of participation implies, by its very nature, the responsibility of participation.

What we believe is that responsible citizen participation should be advocated, which is based on processes of information and the broadening of knowledge. Participation is not the mere externalisation of a conjecture without the parameters of reflection. Nor is it a debate among experts. It is a scenario in which citizens can freely participate and express their opinions. However, these opinions must be based on prior conceptions or knowledge that invite debate and collective reflection. The mere articulation of unreflective and unargued ideas does not have the same consistency and, consequently, does not nurture democracy or generate fruitful participation. Participation for the sake of participation does not lead to better democracy. Responsible participation does. Hence, the intensity of democracy does not go hand in hand with the grouping of opinions. Moreover, the ideal scenario, within representative democracy, is not so much participatory democracy understood as a sum of numbers, but deliberative democracy, as a grouping of reasoned contributions that ferment in a collective debate[3]. Deliberation, after all, rests not so much on the number and therefore the quantity, but on the consistency of the contributions and, consequently, on the quality. If we want an intense, quality democracy, we will have to work to ensure that the greatest possible number of citizens' contributions are based on reasoned assessments, the fruit of information and personal reflection which, when grouped with others, crystallises in public debate. This is the appropriate scenario and not the mere superimposition of unfounded opinions that does not encourage debate, but rather the impossibility of following the minimum guidelines for collective understanding. The massification of information generated by technology does not help in this regard, so that systems for sifting and cleaning up disinformation will also play a relevant role.

The right use of artificial intelligence can help citizens to assess more clearly the relevance of a decision. AI facilitates a more efficient handling of information, making data available to people so that they can form an informed opinion on the necessity or desirability of certain decisions. The ultimate purpose is to contribute to raising the quality of public debate, in line with the principles of the mentioned deliberative democracy (Tudela 2023).

Consequently, it becomes crucial to promote media literacy and critical thinking so that citizens can discern between truthful and false information and participate in an informed way in public debate, what

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[3] Obviously, there are positions in the doctrine that do not encourage the position described above to this extent. Schumpeter, for example, questions whether democracy demands such intense political involvement from citizens.

has come to be called digital literacy. This is no small challenge, of course, but it is the only way for citizens to truly exercise their right to political participation. The capacity for individual analysis is part of each citizen's sphere of freedom, but this analysis can only be sustained if it is based on elements that can be verified. There can be no deliberation, no public debate, when there is false and contradictory information because the reflections derived from it are not conducive to understanding or harmony. On the contrary, disinformation is aimed at confrontation among citizens, the confusion inherent in it only generates a democratic setback because, ultimately, the basic pillars that support the democratic scaffolding are called into question. Without a citizenry aware that not all information that reaches them will necessarily be truthful, and that technology itself is the fuel that *fake news* needs to spread, there will hardly be democratic understanding. An extra effort must be made to observe the veracity of the information that citizens consume and to be prepared for the possibility of having to question certain information that lacks rigour or that overlooks part of reality in order to manipulate or distort citizens' perceptions.

Another aspect to bear in mind with the uncontrolled irruption of technology in the democratic arena is the risk of creating parallel realities in public debate. This occurs when different groups of people have radically different perceptions of reality, based on the information they are exposed to. This can be exacerbated by social networks and recommendation algorithms that filter content to fit user preferences, creating filter bubbles that reinforce existing beliefs and exclude alternative perspectives (Pariser 2011). Its relationship with tribalisation is clear, but beyond grouping people by their common interests, what we are emphasising here is the direct generation of a non-existent reality, artificially created by an uncritical assumption of what is received through new technologies. The nuance is different, and that is why we are expressing it as an element that, although it is clearly related to the above, may be even more worrying due to the perversion of the deception in which citizens can become ensnared. Artificial intelligence algorithms used in digital platforms can contribute to the creation of parallel realities by personalising the content shown to each user, reinforcing their cognitive biases and limiting their exposure to divergent perspectives. Moreover, the spread of disinformation and fake news can be amplified by algorithms that prioritise *virality* over veracity.

To address this problem, it is necessary to encourage diversity of opinion and promote exposure to different points of view, as well as to

develop critical thinking skills to challenge dominant narratives. Strictly speaking, the growth of a society that is individualistic and lacks common reference points is not conducive to channels for debating and listening to different opinions but generating them is certainly the starting point for counteracting these problems. In this sense, deliberation has the potential to transform preferences and interests, which are undoubtedly shaped in a social context, demonstrating that it is not necessary to resign oneself to accepting existing ones as they are or to simply add them up (Cortina 2009).

However, technology can also be used for issues that are beneficial to citizens, such as re-engaging public debate on facts and improving political participation. Thus, to improve the quality of public debate and foster more informed and engaged political participation in the age of social media and artificial intelligence, it is necessary to promote media and digital literacy from an early age, which involves teaching citizens how to assess the credibility of information sources, detect misinformation and engage constructively in evidence-based debates. In addition, effective regulations must be put in place to combat online misinformation and promote transparency in the collection and use of data by technology platforms. Fostering informational pluralism and diversity of voices in the media is also essential to ensure healthy and democratic public debate.

There is no doubt that we are facing two realities that will gradually have to coexist in the social space. Citizens, by the mere fact of being citizens, will continue to participate in public affairs to determine the political reality that organises our coexistence and, for their part, it is impossible to argue that technology will not continue to develop, exponentially moreover, generating new realities from the technological point of view that will have to be integrated into the strictly human reality, with artificial intelligence being the spearhead of this technological development. Thus, observing the unquestionable link between these two elements, reflection should focus on the future that awaits societies when integrating these two issues.

3. A future perspective on artificial intelligence and its democratic impact

Artificial intelligence plays a crucial role in shaping public debate and the dissemination of information on social networks. Recommendation algorithms personalise content to suit user preferences, which can create filter bubbles that reinforce existing

beliefs and exclude alternative perspectives (Pariser 2011). Moreover, AI can also be used to generate and disseminate disinformation more effectively, thereby increasing risks to democratic integrity. Indeed, in the context of elections, AI can be used to coordinate disinformation campaigns (Mateos 2021), mobilise people and use *bots* to spread messages aimed at destabilising a country or creating distrust in electoral processes. The case of Cambodia, where *Meta* recommended suspending the account of former Prime Minister Hun Sen for threatening violence against his political opponents, illustrates how AI can be used to identify and address incitement to violence online.

When reflecting on the future possibilities of a technology as fast-moving as AI, it is wise to be cautious. There are all sorts of approaches (Marichal 2023; López Rubio 2023), some more well-founded than others, but all uncertain. One possibility is that we are at the beginning of a process that will culminate in the complete development of artificial entities through artificial intelligence, which will lead to the reinterpretation of all aspects of human life, including the political aspect. There are, for their part, other approaches that redound to the idea that AI is based on the consumption of data to generate responses and that, when the original data is exhausted, the self-learning mode of these elements will be distorted by having to learn about itself. This would lead to what we see graphically when a photocopy is made of a document which, in turn, has already been photocopied. The logical consequence will be the loss of quality of predictions and behaviour due to the loss of data quality.

Be that as it may, what is important in this respect is to emphasise that the elements integral to the advancement of the new technologies, which are tendentially increasing, will have to lead, in some way, to a substantial modification of the way in which we interpret and manage democratic reality. It will certainly have a direct impact on human decision-making (Papa 2023).

The most pessimistic perspective is that we will be able to be completely guided politically (Rovira 2021), to the point that an artificial intelligence will determine, in a rigorous manner with the study of all available data, what our political choice should be. This is in line with what Innerarity points out when he indicates that "the phenomenon of algorithmic governance is part of a broader trend towards its mechanization" (Innerarity 2020). In doing so, we would renounce our status as citizens. This is the worst approach. But there can also be positive ones based on the same parameters, and AI itself can provide us with the means to find the most relevant information on which to reflect and determine our political adherence. This would

not be a manipulation but, precisely, a valuable tool to dispense with all unverifiable or unverified information. It would shield access to information, or rather disinformation, that would contaminate the political debate. If the elements that pit citizens against each other on the basis of deliberate lies were removed, political debate would be purer and, paradoxically, the very technology that allows for the increased speed of this inappropriate information could be the antidote to prevent access to it.

The latter is the optimistic, positive perspective on how artificial intelligence can curb the advance of disinformation. Generating barriers to entry into the social debate of malicious information will certainly cleanse the public arena of impurities. And another approach, also positive, is the possibility of opening up spaces, especially in terms of time, that allow citizens to interconnect. Artificial intelligence itself can, and indeed must, reduce the workload of citizens. This is a tangible reality that is easily observable in our daily lives. The fear of job losses is notorious, but it is also true that new job opportunities will be provided, as has been the case with previous technological advances. However, many of the activities that have been carried out over the years with a considerable time investment burden will be substantially reduced. Time will be freed up. And that is another scenario conducive to investing time in democratic development, generating spaces for debate and reflection without having to cut hours from other necessary activities. The time freed up by artificial intelligence can be used, without much difficulty, to improve the quality of democratic debate because more time will be available for it.

In close connection with the above, artificial intelligence can digest a quantity of information that is unmanageable for the human intellect, and this is also conducive to democratic improvement. This is based on the principle that we can synthesise information, clarify terms and discriminate information that is not relevant to us with the help of artificial intelligence. Citizen participation can be improved by the contextualisation of information that artificial intelligence can provide. The filtering of this information, not by external or artificial parameters, but with the indications that we each consider, can also be an incentive to establish a more fruitful democratic debate.

At the national level, different legislative reforms must also be addressed to regulate the impact of artificial intelligence systems on democracy. Thus, for example, the Organic Law on the General Electoral Regime (LOREG) should specify the guarantees for the use of personal data through AI tools (Montilla 2023, 42), as well as ensure transparency in the use of these technologies, among other issues.

As we can see, the democratic impact of artificial intelligence will be very significant, but this will depend on the prism from which artificial intelligence is used. If it fits within auxiliary parameters for the political status of citizens, artificial intelligence will improve the quality of democracies. If, on the other hand, it is used as a potential substitute for human reflection and the postulates of artificial intelligence are uncritically followed, we will be treading dangerously on the path to the destruction of democracy as we understand it, in which citizens are the holders of the capacity to decide their own destiny, collectively and subject to political parameters in which peace, freedom and harmony are guaranteed. To opt for citizen subrogation in favour of the postulates of artificial intelligence would, of course, be detrimental to democracy, which is why the importance of technological development as an auxiliary element of human capacities, and not as a substitute for them, should be supported and emphasised.

Conclusions

It is clear that the impact of Artificial Intelligence on democracy will depend on how it is used and how the challenges and risks associated with its implementation are addressed. Thus, the election year of 2024 poses significant challenges for democratic integrity in an increasingly digitised world. The proliferation of disinformation and election-related violence highlights the urgent need to address systemic issues affecting social networks and artificial intelligence. Only through a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach can we ensure that digital platforms fulfil their responsibility to protect and promote democracy in the 21st century.

In any case, as we face this unprecedented election year, it is crucial that social media platforms learn from past mistakes and take concrete steps to protect democratic integrity. This includes implementing more effective measures to combat disinformation, media manipulation and incitement to violence online. In addition, there is a need to promote transparency in the operation of artificial intelligence algorithms and ensure that they are used in an ethical and responsible manner.

Media education and critical thinking are also essential to empower citizens to discern between truthful and false information, and to participate in an informed way in public debate. Government institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector must work

together to develop effective policies and regulations to protect democratic integrity in the age of social media and artificial intelligence.

And, above all other considerations, it is worth emphasising the idea that citizens' participation in public affairs is a human right, a right that perfects the human being by realising it and that allows for the guarantee of other rights of equal importance. The possible alternative to the existence of societies in which citizens participate freely is anything but desirable, so the proliferation of new technologies is to be welcomed, but always bearing in mind that the ultimate guarantee must be one that rests on the protection of human rights, especially one that results in the participation of citizens in public affairs.

In short, it is true that there are many challenges and threats facing humanity in recent years following the emergence and exponential development of AI systems and tools. Legislators and other legal operators have the regulation of these disruptive technologies at the top of their agendas in order not to violate human rights. As is well known, law always lags behind reality, but in the case of artificial intelligence, any attempt to regulate it once it comes into force is doomed from the outset to be obsolete. This does not mean that its regulation should be avoided, but rather that it should be done as far as possible, considering its global nature and with the aim of being a regulation that lasts over time. This has been the premise followed by the recently approved European AI Regulation, which should undoubtedly be accompanied by other national legislative reforms, with the Organic Law on the General Electoral System being one of the first that should be thoroughly reformed to adapt to the digital era, the use of AI and the serious security risk represented by disinformation at election time.

In addition to the threats posed by the impact of AI on democratic processes, positive aspects that reinforce the right to participation have also been highlighted. Thus, it is worth highlighting the capacity of AI-based tools to process large amounts of data, offering clear and detailed analyses that help citizens to make informed decisions; the possibility of creating applications that facilitate public consultations or interactive platforms, increasing citizens' involvement in decision-making or even helping to catalogue and discard false information that clouds the democratic debate.

Without free societies, citizen participation is not possible, so technological development must, imperatively, be developed with this premise in mind.

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