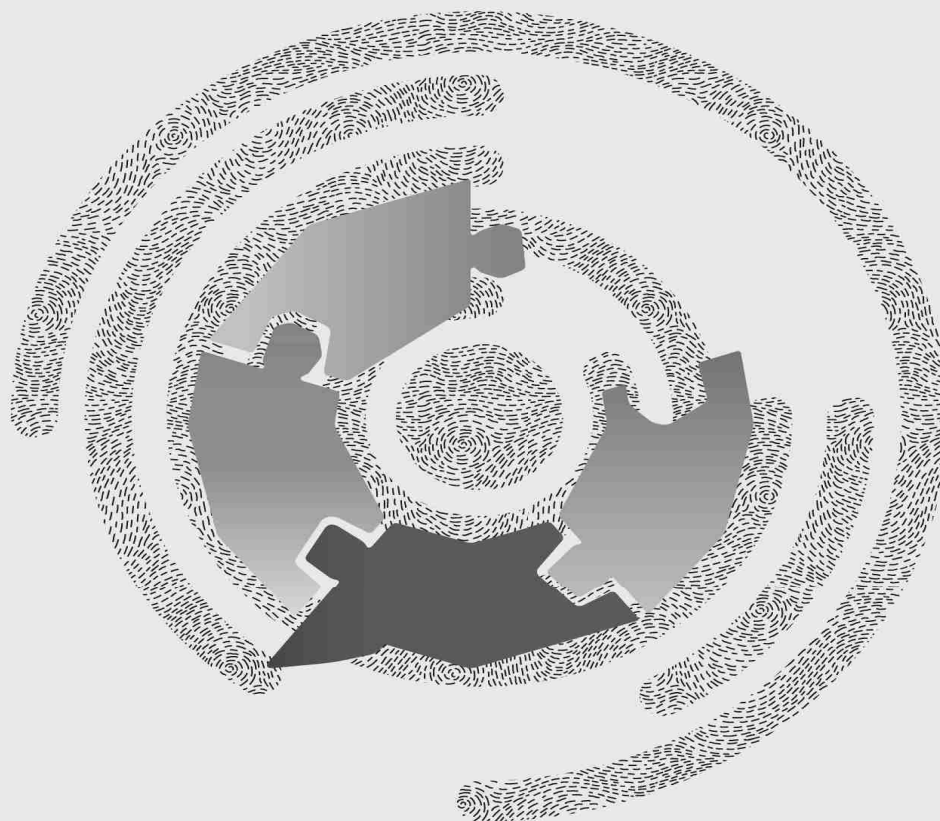# Actas

Proceedings

Colóquio Internacional Epistemologias do Sul: aprendizagens globais Sul–Sul, Sul–Norte e Norte–Sul

International Colloquium Epistemologies of the South: South–South, South–North and North–South global learnings

Boaventura de Sousa Santos e Teresa Cunha (eds)

Volume 1
Democratizar a democracia / Democratizing democracy
Junho – June 2015

/ **Cover and graphic design**

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INSTITUTIONAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gandhi and AAP: Decentralisation and Swaraj against Political-Colonialism

Cristiano Gianolla[1]

Abstract

Elections represent the central participatory moment in liberal democracy. By voting in elections, voters provide political legitimacy to the political elite to take decisions for the whole society. The result is the centralisation of power in the elite and the submission of wider society. Such an outcome is one of the limits of representative democracy and corresponds to what is here defined as 'political-colonialism'. In order to 'democratise democracy', which include the combination of representative democracy with participatory practices, decentralisation may be a method able to counteract to political-colonialism by providing space for power and leadership sharing and by increasing social participation in the political sphere. The Mahatma Gandhi has developed a multicentre idea of democracy based on 700.000 Indian village republics. He used the word 'Swaraj' (self-rule) to characterise this model. The Aam Aadmi Party today advocates Swaraj for villages and cities. This paper aims at exploring the idea and existing empirical cases of Swaraj and decentralised democracy in India.

Keywords: Decentralisation; Democratisation; Elites; Political-Colonialism; Swaraj.

Resumo

As eleições representam o momento participativo central na democracia liberal. Ao votar nas eleições, os eleitores fornecem legitimidade política para a elite política de tomar decisões para toda a sociedade. O resultado é a centralização do poder na elite e a submissão da sociedade em geral. Tal resultado é um dos limites da democracia representativa e corresponde ao que é aqui definido como "colonialismo político". A fim de "democratizar a democracia", que incluem a combinação da democracia representativa com práticas participativas, a descentralização pode ser um método capaz de contrariar a o colonialismo politico, fornecendo espaço de poder e de partilha de liderança e aumentando a participação social na esfera política. O Mahatma Gandhi desenvolveu uma ideia multicêntrica de democracia baseada em 700.000 repúblicas indianas da aldeia. Ele usou a palavra 'Swaraj' (auto-governo) para caracterizar este modelo. O Aam Aadmi Party hoje defende Swaraj para as aldeias e as cidades. Este trabalho tem por objetivo explorar a ideia e os casos empíricos existente de Swaraj e democracia descentralizada na Índia.

Palvras-Chave: Descentralização; Democratização; elites; Político-colonialismo; Swaraj

INTRODUCTION

Robert Dahl affirms that at minimum 'democratic theory is concerned with processes by which ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders' (Dahl, 2006:3). This is a mainstream basic definition of representative democracy and is the canon of 'democracy' in the common sense, however there may not be only one definition because 'there is no democratic theory - there are only democratic theories' (Dahl, 2006:1). Assuming that any group of people is never flatten but rather changes with the variation of the people that it includes and by their life experiences, democracy – as a form of these people to share life experiences – is not an objective to achieve but a permanent transition. It refers to the way a group of people organise itself in different historical contexts. It implies that the democratic debate shall not be limited to a set of procedures, rules and institutions that can define how the decision-making should take place; even less, it can be limited to the definition of a part of the group as those people who will take over the democratic debate and ways to control them. A good part of democratic debate concentrates on forms to bring people's will at the centre of the democratic agenda. However, the western mainstream concept of democracy – as it emerged in the last two centuries – is characterised by a limitation of people's will in democracy. Santos and Avritzer (2005) highlight that the debate in the west has been dominated by two forms of hegemony that reduce the role of the people and burst the role of the elite. These hegemonies have given raise to political-colonialism that is a deviation from the idea of democracy and the acquisition of a formal model of democracy where for a set of democratic conditions most substantial democratic questions are neglected. Chantal Mouffe defines 'Democratic Deficit' the dominant liberal tendency that identifies democracy with the rule of law and protection of human rights neglecting popular sovereignty (Mouffe, 2000:1–2). The path to find ways to overcome this deficit shall include the critical identification of the deficit itself and the proposal of alternatives able to alleviate or eliminate it.

This article is divided in three parts, in the first one it explores the way in which political elitism has dominated the democratic debate and has established a political-colonial regime in which the elite subdues wider society. In the second part, it explores a Gandhian democratic perspective, as a non-western example of a more substantiated democratic approach, and, finally it focuses on the political proposal of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) an attempted empirical alternative to elitist politics. The aim is to investigate if and how Gandhi and AAP provide contributions to democratise the democratic debate and to overcome political colonialism.

POLITICAL ELITISM

The historical review of the development of democracy made by Dino Costantini (2012) proposes a dualism between two groups of political theorists: the first advocating the

supremacy of a dominant group of people (bourgeoisie) over the majority of the people, based on the persuasion that the people (or masses) cannot govern themselves. In this work, we refer to it as the 'elitist' approach. Thinkers of the second group defend instead the necessity of keeping the people as the core of the democratic exercise. This is what we call here the 'self-rule' approach. The dualism between elitist and self-rule approach was elucidated in the 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' by Marx (1970) who advocated the capacity of self-determination of the people and the supremacy of civil society over law and state. In Hegel (1991) the state is a superior entity with respect to the people that he contains. For Hegel the state encompasses and regulates civil society; for Marx civil society has the power to define its own constitution, which become crystallised in the institutions forming the state. This way Marx perspective subverts the predominance of the state in favour of the self-determination of the people. Costantini suggests that the philosophical dualism between state and civil society has also drafted the line between an elitist and self-rule views. The former defends the pre-ordered dominance of the social and political elite, and thereby advocates a protection of the institutional order of the state; the latter considers civil society as the legitimate holder of the right to define democratic institutions and interaction that would be crystallised in forms that are always amendable by the people. The debate on the development of democracy in the last three centuries shows how the confrontation between these two positions has emerged with remarkable dominance of the elitist view that until date defines the theoretical and empirical forms of democracy as we know them in the liberal representative model. This paragraph explores the historical trajectory of political elitism emerging from the research of Costantini.

Constant (1988) and Tocqueville (2010) had manifested the division of the elite from the people by expressing a concrete fear that the masses could come in power and mix-up political leadership with ignorance. Marx (Marx & Engels, 2008; Marx, 1970, 1904) highlighted the polarisation of the democratic concept emerging from the conservative perspective and the fact that the elite did not represent the interest of whole society but rather defended their own. In such view the American and French revolution have produced a formal democratisation but not a substantive one. Formal democracy is a system of institutions having democratic legitimacy but limited participation of the people in the democratic life; substantive democracy emerges instead as a search to make people's will effective in democratic decision-making.

Weber (1994a, 1994b, 1994e, 1994d, 1994c) enriches the formal model with a speculation on the risk that bureaucratic rationalisation would de-humanise democracy and make it a purely administrative rather than political affair. In his view, modern democracy has to limit the excess of bureaucratisation via an active politics devoted to the interest of the nations by political parties in the parliament and under the guidance of a charismatic leader. The leader – whose charisma is measured by the support and social obedience raised among the people – has the visionary role of keeping the nation and its political leadership active

and focused on national prosperity. The parliament is subdue to the leader and provides the mediating space for different social views – as transmitted by political parties that filter social diversity and conflicting democratic aspiration – in debates with a focus on the interest of the nation. Political equality is achieved via universal suffrage which serves also the purpose of dominating and direct social instincts towards the interest of the nation (Costantini, 2012:50–52). While the elitism by Constant and Tocqueville was based on the fear of self-rule by the masses, Weber structures a more Hegelian elitist concept based on the nation as superior and unitary interest.

The elitist approach to democracy has raised to its philosophical formulation in the first half of XX century; however, it was not exhausted and rather developed after this phase. An elitist approach to democracy was developed further by other political thinkers such as Schumpeter and Kelsen as we will see later.

The classical stream of thoughts known as political elitism emerged from the theoretical perspective elaborated by Mosca, Pareto and Michels. Mosca (1939) stresses the political fact of the inescapable presence of an elite and that society is divided between ruler and ruled. Legitimation of the elite comes from external sources (God gave the mandate to the King), in democracy it shall come from the people, therefore the need of elections. In the most advanced democracies, elites are chosen with meritocracy, however they remain oligarchic and the good government is the one that defends freedom of the citizens and social order building on a shared moral base. Pareto (1935) highlights that all historical society were dominated by elites however different elites have adopted different forms to incorporate the best of the governed among the governors. Pareto does not believe in political evolutionism for which all elites would lead to social amelioration, but rather the history of elites shows a wave motion. The modern parliament is the seat of elites' power and democratic theory serves to justify the power of a specific elite. For Michels (1915) the masses are formless and politically passive, they need to be organised. Political parties uptake this role, their organisation it pyramidal under the direction of a leader. Elections are the tribute to formal equality and are the expression and annihilation of people's sovereignty. Professional political leaderships is based on the oratory capacity and the political power on the one hand is strengthened by experience and on the other hand experience produce an estrangement from ideals and an increase of power yearning.

For Santos and Avritzer (2005), Kelsen's proceduralism (Kelsen, 2000, 1955) reduces democratic legitimacy to democratic legality and aims at articulating moral relativism with forms of dispute resolution and conflict management based on the centrality of political parties as instrument to group and make effective the citizen's political perspectives. Santos and Avritzer also believe that Schumpeter and Bobbio developed Kelsen's proceduralism in democratic elitism. Schumpeter (2003), as Constant (1988) and Mill (2004) had anticipated, argued that self-governance by the people is applicable only to small-scale democracy and

not to modern nation-states (see also Dahl, 1998), therefore democracy implies the selection of the political leadership via electoral voting. Schumpeter maintains that the political elite develops the political discourse because the common good is not univocally definable and equality is not possible because people are unequal. Real democracy is for Schumpeter a system to achieve political decision based on an electoral system to elect those who will take decisions. People shall elect their representatives and become otherwise politically passive leaving the political work to the leaders. Moreover, the government must not represent the people, should rather govern and respect the will of the majority of the voters. The electoral law should favour the creation of a majority end limit political fragmentation that would limit the governability. And Bobbio confirms that democracy is 'characterized by a set of rules (primary or basic) which establish who is authorised to take collective decisions and which procedures are to be applied' (Bobbio, 1987:24). Lipset (1994) listed the conditions of liberal democracy which include the western-centrist approach, an elitist view, institutions based on parliamentary system, two party system and electoral validation. For Lipset democracy is also sustained by individualism and must be based on capitalism, with a weak state and a strong market.

GANDHI'S THINKING OF A DEMOCRATISED DEMOCRACY

Gandhi dreamt of an alternative model of democracy compared to the elitist one and he devoted his entire life to the visionary ambition to make India the champion of it. Independence from the colonial rule was for him one side of full independence that could be achieved only through a democratic development of the country in light of a self-rule vision of democracy.

Gandhi bases his democratic vision on a moral conception in which self-rule is the objective to attain via the emancipation of the individual and of the community. In this view, duties are the base of the polity and right derive from them. He develops his idea concentrated on the substantial dimension of democracy as opposed to the formal one. Such view would develop from the grass-root level. His ideal of democracy for India would be a decentralised, scalar – formally essentialist – network of 700.000 village republics as self-sufficient, self-organised, self-governing, co-operative, non-violent and moral communities aimed by the search after truth. 'Gandhi was deeply uneasy with the modern state. It was abstracted from society, centralized, bureaucratic, obsessed with homogeneity, and suffused with the spirit of violence. [...] For Gandhi a society based on Swaraj, a "true democracy" as he called it, was the only morally acceptable alternative to the modern state' (Parekh, 2001:99).[2]

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2   One of the main critics made to Gandhi and his vision of democracy is that it may well apply in small scale and in rural areas but it is not appropriate for modern countries. Parekh brightly clarify this point as follow: 'Gandhi's impoverished view of human life prevented him from appreciating the central principles and internal dialectic of modern civilization. [...] Gandhi's emphasis on the human need for roots and the value of small communities is well taken, but his local communities are too isolated and self-contained to be realistic and too parochial and self-absorbed to avoid becoming moral prisons. [...] Gandhi was too realistic not to see this and kept modifying his views. But his heart hankered after the simplicity of rural life and remained in tension with his head' (Parekh, 2001:121–122).

Gandhi was not a systematic writer. One year before being assassinated, he stated '[w]hat I have done will endure, not what I have said or written' (H 1-5-1947).[3] Nonetheless, he was a prolific writer; the 100 volumes of his collected works (English version) testify this. He affirmed: 'writing is a by-product; I write to propagate my ideas. Journalism is not my profession' (H 18-8-1946). His writing was strictly related with his social activism, 'using the print media for the dissemination of his ideas was part of a clear strategy' (Chadda, 2010: XXI–XXII). Gandhi wrote and edited a number of journals that substantially characterise his social and political thoughts including: *Indian Opinion* (In South Africa), *Young India* and *Harijan*.

The style of his written contribution manifest Gandhi's indivisible aim to reconnect theory and practice. In order to understand his thought the reader must be aware of the historical value of his texts as tools of social emancipation. He did not mean to write a comprehensive theory inherent to the spheres of knowledge and life experience in which he worked during his life. He was neither preoccupied to be coherent in writing but yes in the 'search after truth' (H 29-4-1933).[4]

A reading of Gandhi in light of his social activism must begin with his seminal work *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Gandhi, 1938) which was initially published in Gujarati in the columns of *Indian Opinion* (11-18 December 1909). In this book Gandhi criticises the model of western civilisation which is based on achievement of material comfort and development and he put forward the Indian alternative stating that 'the Gujarati equivalent for civilization means "good conduct"' which include accomplishment of duty and mastery over mind and passion resulting in a moral life (Gandhi, 1938:45).[5] In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi opposes but does not coherently negate the value of western civilisation (P A Mishra, 2012:20) and he 'toned down his statements in this respect in later years' (Hardiman, 2003:71). His own sources included western and non western authors and text including, the Bible, Upanishads and Gita, religious personalities such as Buddha, Socrates, Jesus and the prophet of Islam, and modern thinkers, political and spiritual leaders such as Raychandbhai (or Shrimad Rajchandra), Gopal Krishna Gokhale, William Mackintire Salter, Henry Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy and John Ruskin.

Gandhi did not attempt a bold negation the value of western civilisation or to sanction an unconditional incompatibility of western modernity and India. Gandhi was aimed by the heuristic attempt to contradict the supposed inferiority of the Indian culture assigned by the British trough the colonial dichotomy modern-civilised vs retrograde-uncivilised and he

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3   Journals cited hereafters in short as follow: *Harijan* (published between 1933-1956): H DD-MM-YYYY; *Young India* (published between 1919-1932): YI DD-MM-YYYY.

4   Gandhi wrote a number of books (including *Hind Swaraj, Satyagraha in South Africa, The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and *Constructive Programme Its Meaning and Place*). Gandhi's disciples compiled many other books on specific arguments collecting parts of Gandhi's public articles and texts. Among others, *The mind of the Mahatma Gandhi* (Gandhi, 1967), deserves a special mention for its remarkable consideration among Gandhian scholars. Gandhi had read and approved the first edition (1945).

5   Hardiman underlines that the *sudharo,* used by Gandhi in the original Gujarati version of *Hind Swaraj*, may be translated with 'good way of life': *su* meaning 'good' and *dharo* meaning 'way of life' (Hardiman, 2003 68).

wanted to centre the civilizational discourse in the concept of *Swaraj* or *Self-Rule* (P A Mishra, 2012:18). He structures his arguments reinforcing the value of Indian civilisation and one of the merits of the book was to make many people (Indians and foreigners) to reconsider the concept of civilisation and to give the Indian people a self-consciousness (Hardiman, 2003:71; Parekh, 1989:208–9). Hind Swaraj is the text in which Gandhi polarises the dichotomy of civilisations with the geo-political objective of independence for India and the political intension of developing a self-rule, substantial democracy in the country.

Hind Swaraj is a milestone for the understanding of Gandhi's political thinking in contrast with the western elitist model. It outlines an alternative concept of democracy, progress and development which includes the political, economic, social and spiritual dimensions in which he wants to 'reconcile individual freedom with community concerns' (Joseph, 2013:485). He affirms that '[n]o society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom' (H 1-2-1942) but that at the same time '[w]illing submission to social restrain for the sake of the well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is member' (H 27-5-1939). The path of Swaraj includes a sophisticated social, political and economic organisation in which the individual would become his/her own master aimed at the service of society living in harmony in the community, with nature and God. 'Gandhian conception of individual is fundamentally different from that of liberalism and it has a different implication for democracy' because in liberalism democracy is the aggregative system of self-interested individuals (K P Mishra, 2012:206–7), while in Gandhi emancipated and self-less individuals give raise to the democratic cosmovision.

The democratic discourse and the anti-colonial one merge in Gandhi's work and this joint approach is not limited to the historical colonialism suffered under the British. It rather extends to political-colonialism because for him 'independence should be political, economic and moral [...]' (H 5-5-1946) where the British ruler should not be substitute by Indian counterparts. Otherwise it would be the 'English rule without the Englishman, [...] the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say [...] make India English' (Gandhi, 1938:26). Independent India would remain politically colonial with a westernised elite (Parekh, 1989: 113). The Gandhian democratic concept is not strictly political but includes all sphere of life and attain the spiritual, beyond physical, dimension.

The neutralisation of western influence affects primarily true democracy in which 'every man and woman is thought to think for himself or herself' (H 14-7-1946). The emancipation of the individual and his/her subsequent availability for social contribution is of central importance. A new educational model must therefore achieve a training where practical work is valued and free the subject from any source of servitude (domination from outside and artificial needs) and educate for 'real life' (H 10-3-1946 and H 2-2-1947). In 'nai talim' – Gandhi's educational scheme – practical education combined with literary and spiritual education would result in the education of the person as an independent and freely cooperative member of the democratic polity. The final stage is 'university education [which aim] should

be to turn out true servants of the people who will live and die for the country's freedom' (H 25-8-1946). The political and civic value of education concern a wide concept of freedom that embraces freedom from political-colonialism: '[a]gitation is only for those who have completed their studies. While studying, the only occupation of students must be to increase their knowledge... All education in a country has got to be demonstrably in promotion of the progress of the country in which it is given' (H 7-9-1947). Civil disobedience and Satyagraha (resistance based on the insistence on the force of Truth) are the non-violent resort that include non-cooperation as well as openness to negotiation. Political education serves the purpose of overcoming people's 'voluntary servitude' (Boétie, 2011) – meaning the persuasion that the victim is powerless against the oppressor and that cooperation with the oppressor is the only option – and emancipation of the oppressed by the self-inflicted slavery by reactionary political actions (Parekh, 1989:155–6).

Politics for Gandhi means participation, social support, struggle against injustice (Parekh, 1989:101). Ideal democracy for Gandhi shall emerge in a non-violent society and *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is the main characteristic of it and the guarantee for individual freedom (H 27-5-1939). His philosophy, which is reflected in his democratic conception, proposes a non-anthropocentric cosmovision where human being contribute to the universe including through social service and respecting nature as living being. Translated in the public sphere this implies that harming the other means arming oneself and enriching the other means enriching oneself; love is activism and social service (Parekh, 1989: 86–99). Gandhi's political philosophy is an attempt to reconcile the individual, the political community, the whole humanity (Parekh, 1989:197–8) and the cosmic dimension which include nature and the divine.

For Gandhi a state-centric political culture is dehumanising (Parekh, 1989:28). For Weber and Hegel that dualism state – civil society was constitutional, for Gandhi is not so. Gandhi developed a concept of civil society among the Indian population in South Africa until 1914. When he went back to India, before taking position or giving opinion on any political issue, he travelled the whole country in order to understand the needs of the people and to work with them as promised to his political mentor Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The difference between the philosophical position of Hegel and Weber, with regards to state and civil society, from the philanthropic spirit of Gandhi of being one with his people is evident in the title of 'Mahatma' ('great soul') which was assigned to him by Rabindranath Tagore and the title of 'Father of the Nation' given by Subhas Chandra Bose. Being one with the people he moved from support to obstruction against the British Empire and the Indian nation he wanted to build was not close to what in Europe was known as nation-state – which he considered a machine without responsibility (Parekh, 1989:110–1) –, it was rather an intercultural community based on diversity and enriched by it. The focus on diversity makes impossible in the eye of Gandhi to consider democracy from the perspective of a centralised state, indeed Gandhi advocates a minimal state and a very deep democratic decentralisation based on the trans-scale, starting

from the village dimension. The democratic community is not dependent from central decision but is auto-centred and advocates the virtuous growth of the individuals at the base of the community. As for Weber, the result would limit bureaucratisation; however, in Gandhi this takes place from the bottom-up – rather than a top-down – perspective.

Gandhi maintains that 'political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life trough national representatives' (YI 2-7-1931). For Gandhi democratic power shall be shared by all and elected representative are civil servants constantly in communication and dialogue with the people (YI 1-12-1927). Gandhi traces a line between democracy and 'mobocracy' which takes place when passive masses are used without a personal learned engagement of the individual. Mobocracy is the opposite of his self-reflexive mobilisation of the people (YI 8-9-1920). Civil disobedience is the instrument to educate and motivate masses not for mobs but for democracy against the political-colonial rule of the elite.

Led by the political-colonial elite, western democracy is not true democracy but rather a political-colonial regime, '[a]t best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the Fascist tendencies of imperialism' (H 18-5-1940). In one of his last contributions, Gandhi wished that the congress dissolved in favour of the creation of the Lok Sevak Sangh (Association for the Service of the People) that would establish the system of decentralised 'Panchayats' (the local democratic unit). Leaders directly or indirectly elected by the people would 'serve' both the country and their areas and they derive their power from the service. (H 15-2-1948).

Gandhi is aware that this was the 'India of his dreams' and he did not hesitate to comment also on matters related with the conditions of the existing democratic system forged by the western model. He highlighted the importance of the *public opinion* and self-consciousness of the people in order to extend popular sovereignty and reduce the power of the representatives. Public opinion is the tool to reduce the abuses of democracy (Jain, 2009:36). Gandhi was also a strenuous defender of minority rights against the dictatorship of the democratic majority. The rule of the majority would not overrule the freedom of individual judgment because it contains the moral value upon which the democratic framework is built: '[d]emocracy is not a state in which people act like sheep. Under democracy, individual liberty of opinion and action is jealously guarded' (YI 3-2-1922). *Economic equality* is the bases for democratic equality, it provides for equality of wages and include the 'abolishing of the eternal conflict between capital and labour' (Gandhi, 1945:20). Possession would not be an aim but a tool.

From Gandhi's perspective, the role of *political parties* may contrast with the aim of democracy because it favours the creation of powerful political elite as opposes to the civil service based on duties that should characterise political activism. He is in favour of universal suffrage and believes that at the lowest level of the democratic pyramid (which is the most relevant to him) political parties are not necessary at all (Jain, 2009:42–6).

Gandhi was a religious person but he was convinced that the state should be completely

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secular, meaning that there should be no interference of the state in the personal religious decisions of each individual. He believed that the religious path is a personal one and is fundamental in the search after truth. All religions should be respected and protected in the same way (Jain, 2009:47).

After Gandhi several activists have engaged in experiences to bring his theory into the practice and the Aam Aadmi Party (the party of the common person) is one of them.

FROM GANDHIANS TO AAP

Gandhi refused to take over any official political position in independent India, likewise he refused to take part to the constituent assembly and entrusted – for that purpose – personalities with a stronger sympathy for the western liberal model of democracy: Bhim Rao Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Abdul Kalam Azad. The result was a constitution providing for a 'modern' parliamentary democratic modelled on the western example. The Indian constitution incorporated some Gandhian perspectives including fundamental rights, opposition to untouchability, protection of minorities and universal suffrage from a Gandhian political philosophy (Gupta, 2013:53, 63–5; Prasad, 2011: 248–9; Rudolph & Rudolph, 2006:20–31). But the constitution that Gandhi would have wonted is very different.

Many Gandhians followed Gandhi's example and decided to dedicate their lives to social work as opposed to covering institutional roles, amongst the most famous Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982) and Jayprakash Narayan (known as JP, 1902-1979). Even currently, activists operates with a Gandhian approach, however different that approach may be among them. Aruna Roy and Anna Hazare are two amongst others renown Gandhians that in the last years have succeeded in focusing the country's attention in striking social concerns and created a pressure able to deliver important legislation for the sake of transparency (Right to Information – RTI) and anti-corruption (Jan Lokpal Bill). They work at the grass-root with the people and for the people. Their work has attracted many volunteers active in long and difficult campaigns that have the merit to mobilise the attention of the whole country. The anti-corruption movement produced two main effects: 'First, it was the apparent failure of the Indian representative democracy to satisfy people's expectations. In other words, the legitimacy of the elected representatives was questioned. Consequently, citizen's participation in the decision-making emerged as an important issue in the context of Indian democracy. Secondly, Gandhian method of political action captured the attention of commons who could get a glimpse of what a non-violent movement was like' (K P Mishra, 2012:206). Roy initiated the Right to Information Campaign that lead to the enactment of the Right To Information Act (RTI) in 2005 and Hazare was also very active in particular in Maharashtra state.

Arvind Kejrival has cooperated with both, Aruna Roy and Anna Hazare before deciding to

originate the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP – 'Party of the Common Person') on 26 November 2012. Roy and Hazare have expressed the will to remain neutral with respect to the party system and, as Gandhi, to carry on social service from without the representative democratic arena. Kejriwal has decided instead to work to change the political system from within and therefore he created the party together with other activists including Prashant Bushan and Yogendra Yadav. 'Hazare and Kejriwal agreed on 19 September 2012 that their political ideologies regarding their role in politics were diametrically opposite' (Sachdeva, 2014:71). As any other political party AAP collects criticism from civil society and social activists but he has also contributed to raise new hope for a real change in Indian politics (Hazare, 2014).

AAP ideology is elucidated in the book *Swaraj* written by Kejriwal (2012) before the foundation of the party. Kejriwal critics Indian political-colonialism and reasserts the force and value of Swaraj quoting examples of virtuous local experiment of village democracy which are inspired by the Gandhian model such as Hazare's model village of Ralegan Siddhi. Hiware Bazar is a village about forty km away from Hazare's village and undertook a similar development under the 'visionary leadership' of Prapat Rao Pawar who assert (2014) that the democratic model in his village is a Gandhian participatory and bottom-up approach while the mainstream politicians disregard this example because are interested only in the electoral result. Kejriwal suggest forms to implement a decentralised system in the current Indian constitutional framework and the main point is to grant economic, social and political independence to the local community (Kejriwal, 2012:109–136). The novelty of Kejriwal's Swaraj is the application to the city level where the Gram Sabha (village assembly) is replaced by the Mohalla Sabha (assembly of the neighbourhood).

The growth of AAP was rapid and, after a little more than a year since its foundation, it participated to the first state elections in Delhi in December 2013 winning 28 seat out of 70 achieving an unexpected result which excited the political atmosphere of the country (Parsai, 2013).The victory was also followed by criticism for the lack of political experience and a clear political programme (Gudavarthy, 2013). Since no party had an absolute majority in the State, AAP – second largest party after the Bharatiya Janata Party with 32 seats – had to evaluate the possibility of forming a coalition government. In a short initial phase after elections AAP – in compliance with its criticism to the political system and other party's corruption – rejected to form a coalition with any other party and fresh election where requested (Ali, 2013a, 2013b). However the social and media pressure convinced AAP leaders to consult the people to decide the steps ahead (Pandey, 2013a, 2013b; Ali, 2013c). The people of Delhi were given the possibility to express their opinion of whether AAP should form a coalition government and the majority was in favour of such decision.

The AAP government in Delhi was innovative, provocative and – to some extents – contradictory. It was criticised for political immaturity and lack of political vision. However, it gave to the party the protagonist role in Indian politics, media covered was very high and other political parties were forced to emulate AAP's anti-corruption terminology. AAP

governed for only 49 days in Delhi's state. The decision to resign was taken by AAP leadership when the other parties of the parliament voted against the scheduling of discussion of the anti-corruption bill in the Delhi on 14 February 2014 (Ali, Kant & Ashok, 2014). Resignation from Deli's government sounded like a political strategy of AAP aimed at winning consensus for the national elections scheduled two month after. However, the party lost momentum as well as media coverage. People disliked the lack of concreteness of the party and only after a few month Kejriwal admitted that it had been a mistake. AAP performed electorally way below expectations in the national context winning only four seats out of the 545 of the national parliament.

CONCLUSION

This article analyses in which terms we can refer to Political-Colonialism – starting from an elitist reading of liberal democracy – and substantiate how Gandhi and AAP propose perspectives to think about a more substantially democratic form of democracy centred on the self-rule by the people. Gandhi's ideal democracy provides not simply for another formal democratic structure but for an alternative concept of social organisation. Both Gandhi and AAP faced criticism and social constraints in implementing their democratic proposals, however it does not invalidate the possibility of thinking and consider their importance in the anti-political-colonial struggle. They contribute to raise new questions that help to problematize the way in which a different understanding of democracy can be conceived. Their contribution to the democratic debate is therefore solid both for their direct implication and for the thinking space that they create. Some of the questions that they leave open relate to the role of the leadership in amplifying and making more effective a decentralised democratic approach. Gandhi was a great leader and the most famous Gandhian activists are also recognised as such. Gupta (2013) define them an 'elite of calling'. Does it imply that even self-rule democracy shall depend on the work of an elite, although a selfless one? It is indeed impossible to think to the party of the 'common person' without his leader, likewise it would be difficult to mention the RTI and anti-corruption movements without Roy, Hazare and the other social workers that freely and silently cooperate with them.

'[T]o Gandhi democracy is not merely a form of government. It is also a gospel of the social system. It is a principle of self-reliance, equality, freedom, emancipation of all' (Jain, 2009:54). The comparison between liberal democracy and the Gandhian Ideal is audacious because the former is an actual system while the latter is an abstract model that is experimented only in the small scale. However, this moral and theoretical dimension represents the reason why the Gandhian model is so interesting as an alternative to liberal democracy and not simply a variant within it. It does not aim at mitigating political-colonialism but at identifying a model of 'high intensity democracy' which includes complementarity between participatory and representative democracy (Santos & Avritzer, 2005:LXVI). It propose an alternative to the

political-colonial system. Looking at AAP's experience as a possible partial form of implanting Gandhi's ideal, it becomes evident the complexity of such complementarity: what is the possible inter-play of self-rule democratic experiment with the elitist representative system? Santos underlines that the last three decades marked a change in the relationship between the elite and the people because the state is increasingly contested and new social actors are part taking in sovereignty, including trough forms of participatory democracy such as the experience of the Participatory Budgeting of Porto Alegre (Santos, 2005:311–2). Will AAP be able to resist and penetrate the complexity of the complementary of participatory and representative democracy? This would imply that AAP is taking further Gandhi's vision of democracy giving it an experimental implementation.

A new political culture, based on the horizontality of a solidary community, can be built only on self-rule, decentralisation and participatory democracy (Santos, 2001:181). Although many more elements must be considered in analysing the APP case and its potential, looking at the mere electoral results the strategy of entering in the representative system to change it from inside has failed in the way it was implemented. The adoption of the party logic and the implementation of an aggressive electoral strategy did not deliver the expected revolutionary results because the idea of Swaraj was relegated after the electoral priority. This is the indication that a different approach must be adopted.

Self-rule democracy does not merely imply an alternative political party. As AAP knows very well, what is missing must be far more radical. It is an alternative model to liberal democracy and 'the critical task ahead cannot be limited to generating alternatives. Indeed, it requires an alternative thinking of alternatives' (Santos, 2007:63) which look at the substance of political-colonialism and declares it incompatible with true democracy thereby engaging in changing it from within.

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