

Chapter 8

Exercise of Citizenship in Network Society: Cyberactivism and the Fight Against Fake News in the Brazilian Context

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ABSTRACT

The chapter is based on the understanding that the citizens' lack of awareness of the rights inherent to the very guarantee of human dignity, as well as of the whole historical process that gave rise to the guarantee of such rights, is one of the reflexes that the absence of a citizenship education and for citizenship provoke, even affecting the high rate of dissemination of false news in Brazil. There is a recurrent need to deal with this type of problem, especially aggravated by the presidential race of 2018, where there is an increase in the reproduction of news whose reliability of the source is not verified, although they are evidently false, exaggerated, and sensationalist. While analyzing this problem, the study seeks to examine the harm of this practice to the exercise of citizenship.

INTRODUCTION

The understanding of citizenship is quite complex, since it is a historical concept, which therefore varies in time and space, and which also depends on the legal regime of each country, as Jaime Pinsky well observes, according to whom such understanding does not only vary “by the rules that define who is or is not the

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holder of citizenship (by territorial or blood law), but also by the distinct rights and duties that characterize the citizen in each of the contemporary national states.” (PINSKAY, 2015, p. 9).

Therefore, it is not a question of a uniform evolution of citizenship in all countries, which does not prevent the conclusion that there is “a process of evolution that runs from the absence of rights to its expansion, throughout history.” (PINSKAY, p. 10).

In this context, the present study intends to examine the understanding of citizenship in the Brazilian legal context, as well as its practice, especially in relation to the exercise of citizenship in the network society and the fight against *fake news*.

The mass dissemination of false news via the internet is a worldwide problem. Before the advent of the world-wide computer network, the ability to spread false news was limited, even if one had the possibility of printing, with the newspapers, roads, etc., news did not spread with the ease and speed that is verified nowadays.

The manipulation of news and videos (called *deep fakes*) can represent a danger to democracy and the exercise of citizenship, threatening even the credibility of everything that is published, since people no longer know what is real and what is false.

In Brazil, in particular, the problem of false news is increasing, since the country still has an incipient democracy and the State cannot guarantee the effectiveness of fundamental rights, as assigned by the Constitution, especially those pertinent to the full exercise of citizenship.

The Brazilian Federal Constitution provides, in its art. 205, that “education, the right of all and the duty of the State and the family, shall be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work.”

Such a device therefore links education to the formation of citizenship: “education that does not prepare the individual to be the holder of citizenship and effectively be able to exercise it, marginalizes the person” (KIM, 2013, p. 31), excluding him from the context and the formation of a just and egalitarian society, “not only because of the omission in the provision of the educational service (private or public), but also when education does not return to the formation of this citizenship, when it is rendered in an inefficient and incomplete way” (KIM, 2013, p. 31).

The relationship between education and citizenship is narrow and symbiotic. Without understanding the rights (civil, social and political) that are guaranteed to them, and the instruments necessary to exercise them and claim them, the individual does not exercise his citizenship. In this scenario, although the concepts of education and citizenship are not confused, without that the individual will not have instruments to exercise it.

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