

## Technologies and plural Citizenship. Social recognition within virtual educational communities in Higher Education.

César Correa Arias

Department of Human Resources Studies, University of Guadalajara  
Guadalajara, México  
cesarca@hotmail.com

**Abstract**— This paper explores the problems among migrants, natives and possibilities of the transformation of the citizenship within, cyber educational communities, and how the so called nation-State and the city-State show a new facet of institutional crisis and the incapability of these official structures to offer new forms of plural citizenships for all who are within transcultural and transnational on line education. The central question which parts this paper it is the reference of the possibilities of constructing a cyber citizenship or if it is rather a matter of an expansion of a virtual citizenship in on line educational environments, such as non-structured spaces, not covered by the traditional and institutional strength of the nation-State ideology and therefore as places with a participatory processes of social construction, or finally, as fragmentary spaces that can be also in the situation of Rationalization and colonization of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) by the instrumental rationality of bureaucracies and market-forces.

This paper analyzes the presence and need of a participatory citizenship where the social control is distributed in new ways, new powers and new hegemonies, where identity is deconstructed for inventing imaginarily divided bodies, extensions of our bodies, imaginary bodies of others and our identities mutations. The paper ends with a reflection on a cyber incomplete citizenship, rigged as artifice of technology, as social fiction, as a personal and collective parallel and run off story, but also as a possibility of enriching the identities of all inhabitants of on line educational spaces and to exercise their citizenship rather than appoint as fictitious one, to live autonomy and knowledge while learning in mutual recognition from others and thanks to others. The experience of a cyber citizenship among authentic human beings that promotes self determination and self realization processes.

**Keywords**- International on line educatio;, citizenship; social recognition; socialization;autonomy.

### 1. Introduction

For centuries, the concept of citizenship has been linked directly to the notion of City-State and, by extension, to the nation-State. For this reason, citizenship has been define since antiquity as an attribute for those people who possessed a set of political, legal, social, economic and cultural privileges and rights in a given social context.

That made possible to make a difference between one of other individuals within the same territory, which did not have such privileges (slaves, foreigners, discriminated against minorities), a State machine[1].

In general, it is believed that etymologically the city appears before citizenship, but historically, is certainly the citizenship that produces the citizen and the city. As we can see today, the citizenship is experienced in its clearest form by an individual that possesses the quality of foreigner (*Metecos* as in the old Greece) and that is willing to get the citizenship or the nationality, two concepts that are not quite the same.

This is why the concept of residence has mediated in the affirmation that links the citizenship under the rule of one territory. So, a person can possess two nationalities, but supposedly to exercised one only according to the residence and citizenship of a person within a given territory, this again, from the practical scope of the Law.

In the Greeks' *polis* of the city is transformed through the exercise of citizenship, but not only from Law and right scope, but also from the axiological and teleological point of view.

In Athens of the 4th century, morale was included in a mythic vision of the world. Individuals were sure that they should withstand the weight of being punished by the gods because of their crimes on their own shoulders. However, with the development of personal responsibility and moral freedom Greek concept of destiny begins to evolve.

- “Man shall not be him already responsible for a transcendent exterior force, but to the community, to human society itself. The Greeks of the time of Pericles do not have to answer for their actions before a transcendent being, but first, before their fellows, towards the community, and it is the community, the public, who judged their actions” [2].

As a result, at this historic moment, the modern concept of the community is built as a social unit, capable of the exercise of judgment, and to act in participatory and autonomously process by redirecting a theocratic citizenship towards the birth of the civil society in the perspective of democracy.

- “For the *private man*, that makes his appearance in this time of the ancient Greece, the society becomes an instrument, a social space where individuals can act. How to preserve the community and their own authority?
- The individuals from ancient Greece are no longer accountable to the gods because some time ago that these individuals do not believe in the existence of gods. But individuals are not yet responsible to a homogenous and severe social community because it no longer exists.
- To whom, therefore, individuals are responsible for? Who determine now evil and good? Finally, if there is no longer an absolute power to punish and reward, if the same values are no longer stable, why would individuals have to remain in honesty and integrity? This way, social disintegration becomes the general cause of demoralization" [3].

The community requires their footholds in a set of different values. This is the use of a *techne* and an *enérgeia*, this means, a teleological activity and a moral justice, which is the evidence of the transition from a new culture and a new structure of the community as such.

When Thrasymachus says that: "justice is not anything other than the advantage of the stronger" [4], it is not to put in evidence only the transitional aspect of the above-mentioned crisis, but to make explicit the decadent relationship between the interests of the State, and the content of the moral concepts.

As a result of it, it is possible the reorientation of concepts such as ethics, independence and justice, aimed at the order of the construction of a new citizenship, as noted for Antifón: "justice consist in not transgress the legal precepts of the city in which one is a citizen." "A man can lead himself with no regrets and in harmony before the law, if before witnesses defend laws and when he is alone, without witnesses, argues, on the other hand, the dictates of nature" [4].

The contradiction between legality and morality in public and private order make possible not only the criticism of the Government of the ancient *polis*, but it attacks the very roots of the society of this time. In this way, it sublimates the self-valorization of the individual, and the desires of the individual collide with the customs and the community social laws creating the conflict between morality and legality.

- “The individual personality which has formed within the community of the Greek’s polis with consciousness and ethics do not takes too long to jump the schemes of the same city; The individual rebels against the community, which is already perceived as an obstacle, and claimed the right to live their lives in an absolute manner; claiming the individualism, in short” [5].

Antifón, stipulates that when individuals are in the public space it is compulsory to respect the existing laws without oppose them explicitly. The philosopher is limited to steal the domain of legal action of individuals, but on condition to respect their privacy. Therefore, the public opinion as a fundamental principle of the Athenian ethics becomes a convention of negative content and then the human behavior becomes confused and cynical.

- “In these terms the last sophists expressed the violent escalation of the social crisis. Recognizing the relativity and reach relativism, denounce the disposition of the law and take an ambiguous attitude, rejecting the gods and found a world without moral values or justice; such was its mission” [6].

In this way, the perspective of social justice will create a new Greek citizenship by modifying the social subjects and the citizen, and this society will structure a new kind of city-State whose new core will be the community. This process of crisis at the heart of the ancient civilization, serves us to illustrate the crisis of meaning and sense of the characteristic of the modern nation-State and display, like the Greeks, the confidence in a virtual community abandoned to its fate, but hopeful in the expansion of their rights and individual and collective guarantees and duties of a renew citizenship.

Citizenship refers to experiences with the city and the participation in a network of social spaces, organizations and mobilizations of diverse nature and sense, open and available to citizens. The first question involve in the development of ICT within educational process is how to build a global citizenship that resize the inclusion/exclusion relationships among the concept of connectivism. Who can participate and who cannot.

### **1.1. NATION-STATE REGULATIONS AND VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES**

Although, capitalism has been enriched in its content and practices by the processes of globalization, the affirmation of a global village in our days has not allowed the emergence of a socially responsible global citizenship.

That means that the State-Nation, as we know it: pooling of identities and former provider of social guarantees (not that true in Latin America) is unable today to provide the rights and duties of a global citizenship that allows subjects to anchor their identities to a delocalized, dynamic and changing territory and the redefinition of social control. It is not easy to imagine the State action in these new territories. Does it have to be a common international agreement about this matter? Or it is the culture and the social mobilization that will build this new citizenship? Do outsiders and migrants to technology have to be control by the State? Or we can be that naïve to think that virtual educational space are not regulated, at list in part, from the State and by the institutions of education?

Taking into account the process of globalization, it is contradictory to exercised only the individuals' rights and ethics in a particular context or in a restricted symbolic territory. Social responsibility and ethics must not be considered as local territory, but the actions of citizens in a global context. In the sphere of education through ICT of what it is in stake, is the construction of virtual educational communities with a wide deregulation and dislocation of the territory and a complex network of interactions in scope of a State of rights.

The traditional concept of frontier (border) is therefore unthinkable in all cases within the virtual space, due to the emphasis that ICT have made in the relocation of the interactions between those individuals who are connected. Thus the "connection" appears as a symbolic territory where the physical border is an illusion, but the legitimacy and the citizenship are presented as a huge possibility of expansion, and also as one of the tasks still pending.

Besides, while ICT have reached a global level and have been able to penetrate the public areas, such as *E-Government*, *E-learning* and in the private and mixed sectors and in the presence of social networks like *facebook*, *twitter*, *flickr*, etc., it is the construction of virtual social communities, of what currently put into question the presence and traditional role of the State, as well as the enormous possibilities of building a global citizenship

The construction of virtual communities founded the principle of a fragmented citizenship and much more complex than a traditional community, due to the fact that the virtual communities are not based in the concept of territory as a center of physical and symbolic power and violence (represented by the figure of the Nation-State), but in the concept of connectivity and social interaction.

In this vein, relations of inclusion/exclusion are built in a different way, not just on the idea of a homogeneous legitimate rejection of other foreign and different, but in a highly diverse, heterogeneous community ever-changing and highly interactive, whose desire is always the search for traces of identity and diversity in the other that no longer is an outsider. This interaction is done through a common language, although, perhaps not in their own, but expressed in universal symbols and linguistics turns.

Thus, inclusive and exclusive processes will not be built more from a direct relationship with the territory, but it is build from the demarcation of a symbolic boundary that update the values of coexistence and the legitimacy between the various existing features.

But the community, although it may be deregulated by the dissolution of the physical territory, becomes the object of the construction of citizenship. Of course, it is evident that many questions remain such:

What is the fate of enlarged citizenship which has been liquefied the physical concept of territory, extending its borders to virtual and symbolic territories of greater social interactivity, but where are the bounds of the State social control?

The question is not if the virtual citizens and more in educational spaces can exercise the citizenship without the action of the State, but what would it be the role of the State in this situation and who will shape and decide about the role of the State related to more and more virtual communities in the future?

Indeed the virtual communities highly interacting and deregulated do not aspire to the exercise of citizenship mediated and legitimized by the State, but by the same relations that these communities have founded by themselves.

Thus, the State is not yet capable to generate mechanisms of anchorage and integration that make possible processes a more complex process of identity, to guarantees the legitimacy of the citizens and the exercise of rights leading to the construction of the legitimacy and social recognition [7].

In the same sense, these interactions are limited today by the global market. For this reason, although it is true that both the existence cities and citizenship depends on the ability to "interweave" different interests, and at the same time, to produce - and to reproduce- a political and cultural "unit" among diversity in the Web, the construction virtual citizenship goes to the capacity to establish relations of mutual recognition in a globalised world mediated by global markets.

The ICT can make possible the indication of public and private sectors, as well as for the establishment of new forms of inclusion/exclusion and colonization of the lifeworld. Inviting or blocking a person by its own decision in Messenger, on *facebook* or on *twitter*, and even in the e-mail account, allow us to analyze new hegemonies and different interactions in selective and restrictive virtual territories. The colonization of the life world in the virtual space understood as normalization, homogenization and regulation of the networked interactions, appears as one of the risks and challenges of the participation of the society, the state and the global the market in the own interactions.

## **2. Research Topic**

The object of study of this research refers to the relationships between institutional rhetoric and individual's significant practices in the perspective or building virtual educational communities and how the tension within these two concepts are holding back or make feasible the construction of global virtual educational communities. As well the interest of this research is to analyze the limitations and opportunities of building/obtaining the citizenships of these educational communities.

## **3. Research Aim**

To analyze the relationships within territorial and non territorial citizenship within the creation of on line educational communities in order to explore the possibilities of new des-institutionalized places of learning and citizenship for a global society.

## **4. Key Questions**

- How the State, the Institutions of higher education and the teachers are controlling the possibilities of building virtual educational communities?
- How do the transitions from traditional education to virtual educational communities can affect the citizenship in a virtual space?
- How the relationships of power and institutionalization can affect the nature and relationship between virtual natives, migrants and outsiders of virtual educational communities?

## **5. Methodology**

This research uses a qualitative study and a hermeneutic- phenomenological approach, to analyze the possibilities of a global citizenship in virtual educational communities, but in real terms and true pragmatism.

The center of this qualitative approach can show us the needs and lacks to bet for a global citizenship for virtual educational communities.

Therefore, in using a phenomenological approach it makes possible to identify different and relevant cultural and social aspects around the process of building a virtual citizenship among natives, migrants and outsiders.

This research uses in-depth interview based in a phenomenological approach. Its phenomenological character makes this approach very useful to analyze the individual's experiences that are involved in this research.

These are the characteristics of the In-depth phenomenological based interview:

- Its objective is not strictly to obtain answer to questions, either proving hypotheses previously designed, or evaluating some type of situation [4].
- Its content is temporary and in a literary style with a temporary dimension and a particular sector of reality, where the relationship between storytelling and temporality is crucial for the analysis [7].
- This interview requires a triangulation between the social, educational and professional trajectories, the object of study and the interaction of both mentioned in a dimension of meaning and sense [8].
- Its center of analysis is located in the informants' experience, which makes possible the differentiation between the official rhetoric of reality and the particular individuals' interpretation of reality [9].
- It facilitates the analysis of the individuals' social, educational, cultural and professional trajectories and the particular and collective memory within the institutions.
- It provides the compression of institutional and particular expressions that lie in rituals, celebrations, life styles, desires, expectations and values.
- It uses biographical methods to approach to the informants' configuration of reality.
- It makes possible the analysis of the subjectivity.
- It promotes the understanding of the processes of identity configurations

The research is centered in the experience of teachers and students involve in different undergraduate and graduate courses offered through online education at the University of Guadalajara, in Jalisco, Mexico in the period of 2008-2010. The Categorical analysis allows us to identify different relationships within the official discourses of a global online education and the search for a global citizenship among the virtual educational communities.

## **6. Findings and Discussion**

The categories that emerged from the research are relate to public policy in the field of ICT, students culture within e-learning, the identities related to the development of on line education and the interactions between students in on line education.

The interest of this analysis is centered in the way virtual communities are building on these days, in the basis of interaction and the possibilities of a citizenship within educational virtual spaces.

The students affirmed that on line education is sometimes not allowing them to move with freedom in different virtual spaces and that sometimes on line education is as inflexible and schematic or more that traditional education.

- We try to do the duties, you know, in the platform, but teachers are telling us that we have to do this and that but we cannot not participate in do some criticism about the activities themselves, I mean, the teachers say that he cannot change the platform, because he is not allow to do that. But even sometimes there are some mistakes in the platform the teacher cannot change or try to change the mistakes (Student 1, University of Guadalajara, 2009).

The virtual education with some educational sense requires participation of the different individuals: students, teachers, administrators, etc. The above quote shows the lack of participation of students in the construction of a virtual community, but mostly, it shows the institutionalization of on line education as it is in the traditional education.

- On line education is good because it has very positive things such as the possibility that many people have access to study, but it seems really very traditional. Many teachers give us poor quality materials, or do not give us many explanations or feedback activities. On the other hand, activities do not allow students to meet other classmates, well yes at the forums, but are very schematic, we would have to propose the forums, or perhaps use more blended learning (Student 4, 2009).

The cultural diversity of students in education online also has relevant importance at the time teachers try to create virtual communities. In general, the educational system, the institutions themselves or even the teachers are not making possible the opportunities to create virtual communities, through ICTs, but actual, to institutionalized groups of students, who will seek their way in building networks with different intensity of interaction.

- Interactions in on online education are really poor. When I had the opportunity and participate in classes face to face I realized that we could interact better, or even after the class sessions we could meet in our small group or learning team and then review contents and do some works for the different sessions. But on line education falls short in this interaction, sometimes even when we use *skype*, well this improve a lot the interactions, but still is not the same as in face to face sessions (Student 3, 2009).

As it has be noticed, cultural diversity will rise in online courses since the traditional classroom, as an imaginary and fact institution, hide the cultural origins and expressions of students. .

Now, in spite of students' participation in different forums and academic chats, they have scarcely contact with other students in their courses. Collaborative work among students and students and teachers is barely present in online education and even in some courses that some modalities are blended (virtual and face to face sessions).

Even the official rhetoric of online education points out the idea of the paramount strategy to build and develop communities of learning, it is important that these communities have a live by themselves [8].

## 7. Conclusion

As society we found ourselves among on line education with the support of no gods, as the period of the ancient Greece we have pointed out, with no controls from the nation State or from the institutions. In this long crisis of higher education, the state abandoned intuitions of higher education and leave this institutions to the force of the global market. Around these conditions, the advantages and dangers of a deregulation of the rights and duties as citizens is something to be considered seriously

As in times of Antifón in the antic Greece, the creation of educational communities in a territory expanded and fragmented, suggests the possibility of rebuilding a more coherent citizenship and separated from the stifling controls of a nation-state that exercises a symbolic violence, but at the same time, to assist to the decline of an era of late capitalism that promotes the individualism stands as it refers as an obstacle to the construction of community. It is not individualization or determination, but individualism without limits.

In the limits of on line education, how can we protect and keep today the needs of building a virtual community and the citizenship of it in global contexts? Specially if the State are not longer responsible or capable to be responsible to accomplished its public, who is going to be responsible for the construction of new communities around on line education without a fragmented citizenship.

If there is no longer a consistent power in the figure of the State, an institution that has declined from its responsibilities and obligations for higher education. If the same values are no longer stable, from what agreements or conditions coming from the virtual community should be, it must emerge for the cause of peaceful, harmonious coexistence, one social accountability and social responsibility that allow the virtual communities the possibility to build their own different or global virtual citizenship.

The conditions of crisis of legality and morality in a citizenship injured by the absence of proposals from the State and its indifference to the new territories shows a crisis of meaning and sense that it doesn't appear to be finished and that deals with public policies, but in the establishment of a Community State that we are yet to be built.

In this way the exercise of this new citizenship must rethink from civil rights, as the basis for freedom and self-realization of individuals; the exercise of politics as the guarantor of equal rights before the law and the right to participate politically; the right to a measure of economic well-being and security; and social rights, as the horizon of social recognition in the field of the self-confidence, the self-respect and self-esteem.

In this regard, the virtual communities must design a basis in a set of different values, appealing to a *techne* and an *enérgeia* focus in: Social recognition as a mutual break-up of the dichotomies of the Real body/ Virtual body. The autonomy of citizens and global governance, sustainability in the virtual space, the virtual communities care as a global ecosystem, care of one self and the other.

The status of citizenship in the terms of deregulated territories and the lack of power of the State, authorize individuals to legitimize and exhorts us to become socially involved in the construction of a strong community, self regulated and a State that participates in the evolution of a global citizenship with the elements of intervention mentioned above.

The role of the State in the expansion of the virtual communities should be geared towards the strengthening of identity of the citizens and the possibility of a transnational identity and to claim the solidarity attribute of the community that erodes before the individualism of the later capitalism.

Virtual communities have sufficient tools to finish the symbolic violence of a decaying State and to refigure a citizenship in terms of multiple identities, rights and global duties to new social roles in the integration of global communities of coexistence and joint construction, as well as the reconfiguration of the structure and functions of the State, as a fair and democratic institution

## 8. References

- [1] N. Bobbio. Estado, gobierno y sociedad. Por una teoría general de la política. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica. 1989.
- [2] A. Heller. Aristóteles y el mundo antiguo. Barcelona: Península. 1998.
- [3] Idem
- [4] A. Llanos. Los presocráticos y sus fragmentos. Buenos Aires: Ed. Rescate. 1989.
- [5] A. Heller. Aristóteles y el mundo antiguo. Barcelona: Península. 1998.
- [6] Idem.
- [7] A. Honneth. La lutte pour la reconnaissance. Paris : Cerf, 2000.
- [8] M. Patton. Qualitative evaluation methods” (10th printing). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage publications,1989.
- [9] P. Ricoeur. Tiempo y Narración. México: Ediciones Siglo Veintiuno, 1983.
- [10] I.E. Seidman. Interviewing as qualitative research. London:Teaches College Press. (1991).
- [11] C. Correa. La entrevista a profundidad de base fenomenológica. Una herramienta para la recuperación de trayectorias socio-profesionales y ocupacionales al interior de las organizaciones productivas. *Revista Gestión Pública y empresarial*. Centro Universitario de Ciencias Económico Administrativas, Universidad de Guadalajara. Año 6, número 10, segundo semestre de 2007. p.p 44-63.
- [12] Espinal Pérez, Cruz Elena y Ramírez Brouchoud, María Fernando (2006), Cuerpo civil, controles y Regulaciones. Medellín, Fondo Editorial Universidad EAFIT.