İLETİŞİM TEKNOLOJİLERİ, SIYASI İLETİŞİM VE KAMU YERİ

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Özet

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COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES, POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC SPHERE

Abstract
Communication technologies have an important role in political communication process and public sphere. The purpose of this study is to discuss to relation between new communication technologies and political communication process and public sphere in a historical process. The theme of new communication technologies, especially internet, have a persistent place on the public sphere and communication researches and it is going into the mainstream of political communication researches and studies. Well-functioning political communication process contribute a reliable public sphere. New communication technologies have new potentials to well-functioning political communication process and by the way it has disadvantages too. For example political participation, interactive communication, extending and pluralizing the public sphere is possible with the new communication technologies in a number of ways. However, it is possible to effect destabilisation and vitiation of political communication process. Infollution, manipulation and cyber attacks are easier with the new communication technologies. So this study had been focused new communication technologies advantages and disadvantages about public sphere and political communication and relations between each others. The first part of this study concisely had gone around some public sphere notions, which important for political communication and participation too. Then the discussion had been addressed some centrically themes in the political communication and new me-
dia. Thereafter the study had been focused how negotiation rendement in the online public sphere in postmodern adjacencies of political communication. Finally, the study had been discussed how can establish a deliberative public sphere on the new media and it suggests that the concept of common mind offers an disjunctive way to comprehend the substance of online political communication and discussions.

Keywords: Political Communication, Public Sphere, Communication Technologies

1. Introduction

In modern society public opinion is generally mediated by the mass media, which has come to encompass the Habermasian ‘public sphere’. This arena is now characterised by the conflict between market and ideal principles, by competing interests of politicians and the media. The presentation of information for debate becomes distorted. The opinion of the ‘public’ is no longer produced through deliberation, but is constructed through systems of communication, in conflict with political actors, who seek to retain control of the dissemination of information. The expansion of the communication technologies especially internet as a new method of communication provides a potential challenge to the primacy of the traditional media and political parties as formers of public opinion. (Savigny, 2002: 1) For about a few decade now, many researchers and other observers have been asking whether the internet will have -or is already having- an impact on the public sphere and, if so, the attributes of this affect (Dahlgren, 2005: 147). While the technological construction of society is a longstanding topic, many researchers have recently identified the active roles of software programs and platforms in constructing communication technologies especially internet-based social spaces (Geiger, 2009: 3). Such discussions become unavoidably framed by the general international consensus, emerging since the early 1990s, that the hope is often expressed that the internet will somehow have a positive impact on consultation mechanism and help to construct common mind between all social walks (Dahlgren, 2005: 147). The internet can be considered to be one of the most important device in late-term communication and at the same time it’s one of the most important device in political communication process, which serves as a meeting place for global ‘public sphere’ and construct “public opinion” each individual can have direct or semi-direct access to a global forum where they are able to express their arguments without mediation, selection or censorship (Kazi, 2011: 173). In this context this study’s aim is discuss to relation between new communication tecnologies and political communication process and public sphere in a historical process. As methodology, literature search had been used in this study. In this context the first part of this study concisely had gone around some public sphere notions, which important for political communication and participation too. Then the discussion had been addressed some centrically themes in the political communication and new media. Thereafter the study had been focused how negotiation rendement in the online public sphere in postmodern adjacencies of political communication. Finally, the study had been discussed how can establish a deliberative public sphere on the new communication tecnologies and it suggests that the concept of common mind offers an disjunctive way to comprehend the substance of online political communication and discussions.

2. The Public Sphere and Communication Technologies

The first of all it is critical to obviously understand the nature of the ideological arena, which has named the ‘public sphere’ by Jurgen Habermas. Habermas, defines the public sphere as a realm of our social life in something approaching public opinion can be formed, where access is warranted to all citizens directly or indirectly (Kazi, 2011:
Habermas, analyses public sphere and especially focus the assembly areas, like coffee houses, of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in order to gain a normative understanding of public discourse or communicative ethics and to justify its subsequent disintegration, in what he calls ‘the bourgeois public sphere’ in The structural transformation of the public sphere. He asks the essential question of what are the social conditions that take private individuals to get together to debate public issues with decisions determined by arguments and not statuses (Lunat, 2008: 3). According him “The self-interpretation of the function of the bourgeois public sphere crystallized in the idea of “public opinion”. The prehistory of the latter, up to its articulated meaning in late eighteenth century, was naturally quite long and hitherto known only in its broad outline. Nevertheless, it will serve as an introduction to that idea of the bourgeois public sphere which, after having received its classic formulation in the Kantian doctrine of right was revealed as problematic by Hegel and Marx and which, in the political theory of liberalism around the middle of the nineteenth century, had to admit to the ambivalence of its idea and ideology” (Habermas, 1991: 89).

Public opinion is vital for political actors to maintain their legitimacy and political authority. In last-term western modern liberal society public opinion is generally mediated by the mass media, either through the presentation of opinion polls, or more generally in the reflection and/or creation of public opinion. Jürgen Habermas presents a framework through which to analyse the relationship between the media and public opinion formation. The ideals of Habermas’s notion of public opinion in the public sphere are premised on the assumption of rational-critical undistorted debate and universal access. Legitimate government in western modern liberal states ideally represents, reflects and responds to public opinion. However, there is considerable discuss as to what constitutes public opinion. The term tends to be used in the broader sense as a representation of public consciousness or will, anything acted upon or expressed in public. Micro-level psychological perspectives offer procedural accounts of individual opinion formation, whilst macrolevel approaches offer an holistic analysis and attempts are made to quantify opinion through the usage of polls. In this context Habermas propound a normative perspective of public opinion formation. He argues that the ‘public sphere’ is the site where public opinion is formed and expressed. The ‘public sphere’ is the point at which state and civil society interact. Individuals come together to reflect critically, through reasoned discuss, in public, on themselves and the practices of the state. Through deliberation and justification, the norms and values that underpin the governance of society emerge. These are then considered valid if they gain the consent of others within the community, promoting consensus and cohesion, rather than deterioration. (Savigny, 2002: 1-2)

Habermas, in his famous study, which named “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere”, have been argued that European society in the middle ages showed no indication of a public sphere and public opinion as a “unique realm distinct from the private sphere” and each stratum of power was being dominated by the authority greater than theirs. The feudal landlord publicly constituted his power where the lord and the estate of the realm was the land, “instead of merely functioning as deputies for it… they represent their power before the people, instead of for the people”. However, changes in Europe’s political structure in the eighteenth century, to a great extent substantiated in capitalist modes of production, and enlightenment philosophy climaxed in the collapse of feudalism, announcing the entry of the bourgeois into center stage. Unlike the feudal system that made no distinction between state and society, public and private, the new social order defined the boundaries of state and private life - private sphere, thus en-
abling the formation of an arena which occupied the space between the state and private sphere - a public sphere. More accurately a ‘bourgeois public sphere’ where members of a property-owning, educated reading public were engaged in rational-critical debate on issues primarily relating to literature and politics. In this context communication technologies, which especially print media in seventeenth and eighteenth century, had been spread significant of public opinion and public sphere. Print media played a significant role in defining the bourgeois public sphere in those days (Kazi, 2011: 173-174). This rational deliberation was characterised by freedom of speech, universal or common access and inclusiveness, and was neither state nor market controlled. Habermas charts the transformation of this site of rational-critical debate, demonstrating how the political task of the public sphere became the regulation of civil society. As the mass media have come to encompass this ‘public sphere’, implications for the formation of public opinion arise. While increased accessibility to the media and market conditions were assumed to prevent state and institutional domination of the public sphere, the media and the state have become interlocked. New media have to balance the demands of the market with the well-functioning political system requirements of states. These tensions between the attempts to form public opinion by the state and its institutions, and the media, whose well-functioning political system functions conflict with the drive for profit, characterise the public sphere in late-modern liberal states. The pressures of market forces and political actors have resulted in media who not only construct but are the debate, rather than informers of it (Savigny, 2002: 2). In postmodern times, with the development of communication technologies, internet has been adapted as the highly used medium for communication by the people (Kazi, 2011: 174). From its unusual beginning as a data-sharing network designed by the United States military to remain operational in the event of a nuclear attack the internet has quickly become one of the most extensive and important media technologies in late-term life. As first universities and then households began to link up to this global communications network at an exponential rate, one of the first and most longstanding predictions was that such a medium of communication would radically transform late-term society for the better-as most early accounts demanded (Geiger, 2009: 2).

It is important to know whether internet can be approximated to serve as Habermasian public sphere or as an ‘Athenian agora’ in ancient Greece. The Athenian agora was not merely an open space, but chiefly a public space where the ecclesia, the popular assembly of Athenian citizens, could gather, exchange information, engage each other in debate on premeditated issues impacting the polis. One may presume that the internet does possess many features of the Athenian agora as it attempts to render the physical space of the ancient Athenian agora into a virtual and global one. The spatiality in the Athenian agora presumed physical bodies gathered together in physical space. The new virtual global agora radically re-articulates the conceptions of space and body and promise to construct a new public sphere where people can shop, trade, converse, flush joint, debate and face to face meeting on the net. As in the case of physical bodies in a physical space, the global virtual agora consists of digital bodies in a digital space. (Kazi, 2011: 174) In this context it is hardly surprising that the internet has been garnering attention from public sphere scholars for a long time. The internet as a network of networks has some inherent technical properties, such as interactivity, openness and the potential for equality, that lend themselves to reflections from a public sphere perspective. In order to analyse the internet in such a method, online communication is often contrasted to classical mass media, because the latter offer, for the most part, only a one-way stream of information flow, whereas the internet holds the potential for many-to-many communication without some of the limitations of physical many-to-
many communication, such as the need to convene in one geographical location. In this line of reasoning, the internet remembered images of a possible digital agora early on. (Rauchfleisch and Kovic, 2016: 1)

Drawing extensively on the philosophy of Jürgen Habermas, a predominant estimate was that the internet would usher in a rebirth of the public sphere. As Habermas argued in the mid-20th century, the public sphere had atrophied in a society where the high barriers to entry associated with radio, television, and print media, political discourse had been monopolized by a handful of monolithic mass media institutions. His ideal vision of a social world in which the only force was discourse, or -the unforced force of the better argument finally seemed possible in a virtual world. Yet despite the fact that his theories quickly became the de facto intellectual tradition deployed by the Internet’s most vocal supporters, Habermas remained silent regarding the role of the Internet in the public sphere for quite some time. He has recently spoken out on the issue, although his brief remarks disappointed many who continually cited his work to celebrate the internet and critique traditional mass media. Habermas claimed in 2006 that computer-mediated communication has little more than a parasitical role to play in the public sphere, largely due to the way in which internet-based discourse communities have fragmented the public (Geiger, 2009: 2). According to Dahlgren if the vision of a singular, integrated public sphere has faded in the face of the social realities of late modern or postmodern society, so has much of the normative impetus that may have previously seen this as an ideal. The goal of ushering all citizens into one unitary public sphere, with one specific set of communicative and cultural traditions, is usually rejected on the grounds of pluralism and difference. There must exist spaces in which citizens belonging to different groups and cultures, or speaking in registers or even languages, will find participation meaningful. Differences of all kinds, including political orientation and interests, ethnicity, cultural capital, and geography, can warrant specialized communicative spaces. At some points, certain groups may require a separate space where they can work out internal issues and/or cultivate a collective identity. Not least we must take into account alternative or counter public spheres, where political currents oppositional to the dominant mainstream can find support and expression. These were first formulated in terms of class (the proletarian public sphere) as a direct response to Habermas’s emphasis on the bourgeois public sphere. Later, the other groups further developed the ideas. It is here where the Internet most obviously makes a contribution to the public sphere. There are literally thousands of Web sites having to do with the political realm at the local and global levels; some are partisan, most are not. We can find discussion groups, chat rooms, alternative journalism, civic organizations, NGOs, grass roots issue-advocacy sites, and voter education sites. One can see an expansion in terms of available communicative spaces for politics, as well as ideological breadth, compared to the mass media. Structurally, this pluralization not only extends but also disperses the relatively clustered public sphere of the mass media (Dahlgren, 2005: 152). In this context in recent years, this interactivity of the internet is perhaps most prominently realized with social media. If by social media we mean internet-based applications that allow the invention and exchange of User Generated Content, then social media represent the most acute and a very immediate form of an interaction between users who are not merely a passive audience, but active and interconnected agents (Rauchfleisch and Kovic, 2016: 1).

3. Communication Technologies and Political Communication

Communication is central to the politics in a historical process. New information and communication technologies almost are influencing all spheres of social life in late-
term societies is of course not news, but the cultural, economical and political realms too (Dahlgren, 2005: 150). In this regard Blumler and Denis Kavanagh have offered some preliminary hunches, proposing that a qualitatively different political communication system is emerging, what they have planned as the third age of political communication. They contrast this to earlier ages, the first covering the late 1940s and 1950s which combined partisan political loyalty, strong and stable political institutions and relatively easy access to mass media. This was followed by a second age of limited-channel network television in which the political audience was expanded and the news media took an increasingly prominent role in the calculations of governments and parties. Here the media, and especially television, delivered political information to a public that was assumed to be homogenous and passive. In the late-term third age by contrast, the avenues of political communication are multiplying and are aimed at audiences that are diverse, fragmented and active. The new modes and means of communication have hailed a rapid acceleration in the news cycle along with a corresponding contraction of political and journalistic timeframes. Moreover developments in information and communication technologies have created a new political and cultural environment characterized by global reach, ubiquity and highvelocity. Specific trends identified by Blumler and Kavanagh in this current era of media abundance include the increasing professionalization of political advocacy, growing competitive pressures within and among media organizations, anti-elitist popular sentiment and new forms of populism, and an increase in multilateral communication potentials both in terms of new media and novel forms of political reception and experience (Crozier, 2006: 3-4). When political communication is considered in this context technological advances, especially communication technologies, have impacted upon the nature of political activity and the political message itself. Each technological communication development has raised concerns in respect of its impact and influence on public opinion. One of the last most efficient devices internet is an instrument, as yet, largely outside of traditional elite control. This medium offers greater opportunities for individuals to participate and embodies a challenge to the existing forums of debate and new discussing platforms (Savigny, 2002: 1). In this regard politics, regardless of the point of origin or destination, have moved into the global public domain due to mediated channels of communication. Within a matter of seconds anyone with access to these technologies can learn about global events or even watch in real time (Miller & McKerrow, 2010: 65).

Bruns, examines and supply relevant insight as he describes the 2007 Australian elections in which the battle within federal politics was equal to the battle between mainstream press and “citizen journalists and news bloggers” Bruns argues that these battles expose a chasm in the traditional mass-mediated public sphere, revealing a decline in the representativeness of public opinion (Miller & McKerrow, 2010: 70). According to Bruns “it is no accident that this challenge to the continued existence of the public sphere as an independent, intermediary system between state and society has emerged precisely at a time that the fundamental framework for mass-mediated communication itself is tested and undermined by the arrival of networked, many-to-many media as an alternative to the traditional mass media model of the industrial age. The state → public sphere → society model maps immediately on the producer → distributor → consumer model of the industrial economy, best formulated in the context of political mass media perhaps as politicians → journalists → citizens; in keeping with the dominant media structures of the industrial age, none of these models provide for strong mechanisms allowing feedback from the consumers or end users in the chain back to its starting points - communication remains largely unidirectional except for an occasional, limited
opportunity for consumers and citizens to express their preferences through their purchasing (or voting) decisions” (Bruns, 2008: 68-69). Whilst such as traditional modeling can correctly explain historical forms, the public are rapidly developing their own, alternative media citizen journalism sites, news blogs, and other spaces for user-led content constitute within which they conduct engaged and lively political discussions and deliberations away from the perceived spin of journalism’s punditariat (Bruns, 2008: 69). Bruns offers four key principles to beyond the stance of customer and end user - chiefly, the closely related field of citizen journalism, which acts as a protostage to public political deliberation and policy development. According him, such possibility is likely to be based on the operation of four key principles:

1- Open participation in policymaking processes, and communal evaluation of the ideas which emerge from it;
2- Fluid heterarchy of participants, ad hoc emergence of meritocratic leadership structures in the community based on the contributions made by individuals;
3- Continuing processes of political deliberation, whose artifacts remain continuously unfinished and up for further review and improvement; and
4- Communal ownership of the policy outcomes rather than ascription to any one leader, but individual recognition of key contributors (Bruns, 2008: 74).

According to Blumler and Gurevitch, late modern periods societies, as presently organized, is sucking the substance and spirit out of it. Fortunately, an opportunity and means to do something about this have emerged amidst the welter of technology-led change of media systems. The available chances are fragile, however, and must be grasped in a manner that is both visionary and practical. It would be utopian to rely on the spontaneous activation of the better civic instincts of politicians, journalists or voters to harness computer-based communication to the needs of a well-functioning political system (Blumler and Gurevitch, 2001: 1). Blumler and Gurevitch summarized the ways that the traditional systems of political communication in Western political systems are being destabilized by changes in late modern society. They took up a number of by now familiar themes: (Dahlgren, 2005: 150).

1- Increased sociocultural heterogeneity and the impact that this has on the audiences/actors within political communication.
2- The massive growth in media outlets and channels, along with changes in the formats of media output, the blurring and hybridization of genres, and the erosion of the distinction between journalism and nonjournalism.
3- Today’s increased number of political advocates and “political mediators,” including the massive growth in the professionalization of political communication, with experts, consultants, spin doctors, and so forth sometimes playing a more decisive role than journalists
4- The changing geography of political communication as the significance of traditional national borders becomes weakened
5- The cacophony that emerges with this media abundance and so many political actors and mediators
6- The growing cynicism and disengagement among citizens (Dahlgren, 2005: 150).

**Conclusion**

This study in general has attempted to address the relationship between communication technologies, political communication and the public sphere. When we look over this relation we can see that there is a close relationship between these areas. Communication and communication technologies are central to the politics and public spheres
in a historical process. In this context new information and communication technologies almost are influencing all spheres of social life in late-term society is of course not news, but the culturel, economical and political realms too. Considering the late-term societies have advantages and disadvantages to construct public opinion in a large public sphere. There are very much communication devices to connect each others. So political participation, interactive communication, extending and pluralizing the public sphere is possible with the new communication technologies in a number of ways. However these devices presents a cacophony at the same time and it is possible to effect destabilisation and vitiation of political communication process. Infollution, manipulation and cyber attacks are easier with the new communication technologies. New communication devices are not completely uncontrolled, they significantly controlled by the governments and service provider companies. So there is a rivalry between governments and international service provider companies too. Whilst strong governments and states can regulate and restriction to service provide companies movement areas and policies, weak governments and states don’t a significantly affect on the companies. This situation shows that there are still significant structural problems about a well-functioning political communication process and common mind although new communication technologies, especially internet, have advantages to construct common mind in a large public sphere.

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