

Political Communication, Citizen Journalism and Cyber-Societies: A Faster Way towards Democracy?

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Abstract

Having a quick look at the literature review, it is possible to state that political communication, citizen journalism, and democracy concepts have usually been used in collaboration with each other especially after the long and sometimes complex new media theories take the core place in the debates. While some scholars, within the context of citizen journalism and political relation, highlights the role of social media and other new media courses in democratisation and more active political participation, some other debates that although the new media technologies give political communication campaigns a better, cheaper and more interactive formation, it seems quite difficult to extend this “good formation” to a greater democracy as the complexity of cultural attitudes, socio-political structure of a society and historical dynamics do not let new media channels and their active practise by the citizens to have the same influence at any locations.

Therefore, this article, based on an extensive literature review, while giving insights regarding the long deliberation at the background of citizen journalism and political communication it aims to examine (a) the role of social media and other new media courses in political communication, (b) the influence of citizen journalism in democratisation, (c) the new and traditional way of news production regarding political communication and (d) lastly, questioning the reality of the recently emerged “we’re all journalists now” expression, aims to understand if civic contribution, through citizen journalism, into political communication breaks the taboos between politics and the society and so shortens the long way towards democratisation.

Key Words: Citizen journalism, democracy, political communication, public sphere, new media

Siyasal İletişim, Yurttaş Gazeteciliği ve Siber Topluluklar: Demokrasiye Giden daha Hızlı bir Yol mu?

Öz

Literatür taramasını hızlıca gözden geçirince; siyasal iletişimin, yurttaş gazeteciliğinin ve demokrasi kavramlarının; özellikle, bazen karmaşık ve uzun olan yeni medya teorilerine dair konular tartışmaların ana konusu olduktan sonra; birbirleriyle örtüşen ve birbirlerini açıklayan bir biçimde kullanıldıklarını söylemek mümkündür. Bazı teorisyenler; yurttaş gazeteciliği ve politika ilişkisinde sosyal medya ve diğer yeni medya kanallarının demokratikleşmedeki rolüne vurgu yaparken, diğer bazıları; yeni medya teknolojilerinin siyasal iletişim kampanyalarına daha iyi, daha ucuz ve daha interaktif bir biçim vermesine rağmen, kültürel tutumların karmaşıklığı, toplumun sosyo-politik yapısı ve tarihsel dinamikler nedeniyle bu yeni formasyonun ve yeni medya kanallarının ve aktif kullanımlarının her yerde daha anlamlı bir demokratikleşmeye yol açmayacaklarını belirtmişlerdir.

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Bu nedenle, elinizdeki makale; geniş bir literatür taraması üzerine kurgulanıp bir yandan yurttaş gazeteciliği ve siyasal iletişimin arkasındaki uzun tartışmalar hakkında bilgi verirken, diğer yandan (a) sosyal medya ve diğer yeni medya kanallarının siyasal iletişimdeki rolünü, (b) yurttaş gazeteciliğinin demokratikleşmedeki etkisini, (c) siyasal kampanyalara dair yeni ve geleneksel haber üretimini analiz etmeyi ve (d) nihayetinde, son günlerde sıklıkla vurgulanan “hepimiz artık gazeteciyiz” gerçekliğini sorgulayarak, vatandaşın yurttaş gazeteciliğini sayesinde siyasal iletişime yaptığı katkının toplum ve siyaset arasında tabuları kırıp kırmadığını ve demokrasiye giden uzun yolu kısaltıp kısaltmadığını anlamaya çalışacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yurttaş gazeteciliği, demokrasi, siyasal iletişim, kamusal alan, yeni medya

1. Introduction: A Theoretical Perspective

Worldwide mobilization has brought the change to many sectors and professionals. “The identity of media has changed even more dramatically than that after the computer” (Manovich, 2006). Terms, such as new media, online blogs, online newspapers, internet TVs, news websites and so on are started to be debated and referred to this change process. The growth of new media technologies is now radically challenging traditional “media outlets” (Everett and Caldwell, 2003). Journalism is also one of the professionals which have been facing those kinds of alterations. While “traditional journalism” is still keeping its attraction, internet or online journalism has already started to be a “rival” to the traditional one as we are now in firmly in the digital age when the whole journalist process is changing. Gathering, sending and the whole news process is digital (Herbert, 2000: 9).

Digital media technologies and their applications and popular adaption and acceptance of these computer applications have altered our perceptions and behaviors towards the world we live in. The internet and other technologies have freed the public from what we used to understand as “mass-media” (Everett and Caldwell, 2003). The advent of the internet seems to provide us freedom of expression and destroyed the monopoly of publishing and distribution. Thus, the internet has allowed media to have unprecedented opportunity to disseminate information and ideas without consuming much money or effort. Whilst media has these advantages, audiences can contribute to the media content either via providing the self-productions or presenting their opinions, which will be useful to managers, about any subject (Atton, 2006: 139). Now, communication is a more important and essential process in daily life as it also provides people to participate actively in the political process (Merrill and Lowenstein, 1979).

Potential implications of online technologies, on the other hand, have brought change to the news production and consumption. Convergence of computers and telecommunication has brought a new media form that embraces all forms of human communication in a digital format where the rules of news production are no longer seem that strict. Forums, chat rooms, blogs and social media courses are now making the audience co-constructors of information appearing in online platforms. Furthermore, because online news websites and the traditional newspapers are opened to the public involvement, readers can post their views alongside the media experts which allows them to have an online satisfaction. This engagement and public appearance encourage them to write more and contribute to the online news production, so the journalism (Boczkowski, 2004: 141).

While the internet is affecting media in many aspects, it has also heated the debates about “alternative” and “activist” media which include a wide range of activities such as online video, online comments, marketing, advertisement, newspapers etc. All these possibilities highlight the “active” participation of readers/audiences to the media creation. Citizen journalism, therefore, can be accounted as a part of “alternative and activist” media, since it allows people to contribute to the media via diverse courses. Therefore, the term *citizen journalism* describes various forms of publications including news, general information, and features, which are not produced or distributed by the mainstream media organizations but by the individuals or small, non-hierarchical groups of citizens (Franklin et al, 2005).

Yet, handling it within the context of cyber activism, the public’s media involvement may either be positive or negative (Peters, 2003). *Activist media*, as it implies, encourage readers to get involved in social change. Accordingly, alternative media is “alternative” because of its context of response to the cultures within which they are produced and consumed. Mostly, that participation or involvement in social change takes part via political issues or volunteering. Here it is also necessary to note that, the publications which are the result of social and political activity should be considered as part of mass-media products. Electronic media or internet helps alternative media practitioners reaching potentially large audiences and producing that is much less expensive than any other method. Thus, activists, who also called *democracy workers*, participate in political or daily debates through an easier way (Waltz, 2005: 8-91).

Citizen or *participatory* journalism is also a matter of “public sphere” in which mass media can help citizens learn about the world and debate their answers which will help them in the daily life. Thus, the public sphere is related to politics and democracy. Curran; while

explaining *public sphere* as a public forum in which private individuals exercise formal and informal control over the state, he also relates this formal control to the election of government and the informal control to the pressure of public opinion (Curran, 1997). In this context, in public sphere citizens, while responding to the mass media effect, they also are contributing to the politics. Therefore, the development of democracy, particularly in the west, is parallel to the emergence of the mass media as the dominant institutions of the public sphere. In this regard “the good society” is described as where popular politics takes form and citizens can easily constitute themselves as active agents in the political process (Dahlgren and Spark, 1997).

The potential of the technology is to create a more equal and free arena in the public sphere. Despite further censorship debates, accessing the internet is supposed to have no restrictions either in terms of the content or the user. Thus, the internet is not just a new platform for journalists but for everyone who has necessary technological devices. It is now a very highly valuable resource for news gathering and way of presenting it (Fleming, 2000; Muneri, 2016: 175).

Today we know a lot about the media, politics and the democracy. All those knowledge help us with understanding the various dimensions of the public sphere. For example, the sociology of the news production teaches us an important deal about the conditions which shape journalistic practices and output that can be regarded as the starting point of “citizen journalism”. On the other hand, it is in many terms related to sociology which is about “public opinion”. Here public opinion is what is formed by “citizen journalism” and vice versa. Public opinion and citizen journalism together provide the political contribution which will give the opportunity to people to participate political life in online public spheres which were once a "public place" (Dahlgren and Spark, 1997).

Despite ongoing debates, the questions about aforementioned issues seem to longer occupy media and politics agenda. What are the limits of the new media and what does it include? Is it internet, computer games, CD-ROMs, computer multimedia or more? How new media technologies affect us as citizens and as consumers (Sunstein, 2006)? Is citizen journalism capable of what the traditional journalism can do or simply is something more? Is it really the mastermind behind the social movements such as *Arab Spring* in the Middle East and *Gezipark Protests* in Turkey which by some called democratic phenomenon? While everyone can participate the political communication via citizen journalism, does not it bring amateurism to journalism as both experienced and inexperienced can produce the news? “Let the citizen

beware” (McManus, 1995: p. 196) and participate, but in what sense? Does citizen journalism contribute to cultural improvement or is it an obstacle to a real personal development?

2. Citizen Journalism, Cyber Space, and Traditional Journalism: Accuracy and Instantaneity

“We are in the middle of communication revolution, expressed in a proliferation of media forms and media technologies” (Collins and Murrioni, 1996). For now, it is difficult to predict if these changes are a threat or a promise for media or particularly for journalism (Norris, 1997). In the early 1990s, scholars believed that internet and World Wide Web were nothing more than passing fads and therefore not worthy of close attention by journalists. However, today few would disagree that digital media technology are important and have significant impact enough big to change the journalistic structure, as it is currently converted to “digital journalism” related to electronic computer (Kawamoto, 2003; Friedrichsen and Kamalipour, 2017).

Journalism is all about news, events, gathering the information and presenting it to the audiences within news production rules. “More specifically, it entails the critical analysis of the various process involved in gathering, evaluating, interpreting, researching, writing, editing, reporting and presenting the information and comment of wide range of subjects that are disseminated via an expensive range of mass media to diverse audiences” (Franklin et al, 2005). It is a simple profession about asking questions of people and events (Fleming et al, 2006). Basically; journalists find, choose, gather and construct the news and then prepare the newspaper working with the words. They discover the news wherever and however it is and report it. This reporting is about talking to people. Therefore, journalists should know how to be clear, how to think well, how to translate ideas into simple ones and how to write them enough clear to make it understandable to the readers. It is analyzing and interpreting events around us; knowing how government, politics, business, industry and modern society work and being able to make interesting stories out of all kinds of events we may face or hear. Hence, it consists of practical skills and a wide intellectual foundation, which enables reporting. Nonetheless, it differs from other disciplines as it needs theoretical and practical ability (Herbert, 2000: 9).

Journalists serve society in various ways. Preparing their news for the newspapers, they inform their readers and present news in an understandable way (Anderson and Wand, 2007).

They act both as watch-dogs for citizens and as means of communication among the groups within the society, thus they promote social cohesion and social change. Here reporting political and social news is one of their serious functions (Sparks, 1997). They animate democracy and give a practical freedom of expression. In this regard; journalism is the ultimate expression of democracy and freedom (Burns, 2002: 19).

Furthermore, journalism is regarded as an instrument of politic propaganda. Journalists, in terms of shaping public opinion, are called as "political actors" (Zelizer, 2004: 171). Journalism has always taken the "politics" as a core element of its coverage. Hereby *Political journalism* is existed to stress the relationship between the politics and journalism (Anderson and Ward, 2007). McNair calls the politics as journalism's "backbone" since it always is an important subject to write and talk about which will meet readers' demands (McNair, 2000: 45).

Journalists in this century, through technology, are doing their jobs in an easier way. While writing the news on the computer, they can access and analyze the information through the internet. Thus, journalists are now better equipped to access alternative interpretations of events and information which would also allow the audience to choose the most accurate source. Moreover, online facilities help journalist with conveying their stories to large audience free from constraints of traditional publishing. Normally, in traditional journalism, it used to get more time to prepare news and present it. A journalist used to start his/her investigation on the basis of rumor. From here they track down the people involved in the issue either as victim or experts on the subject and facts used to be stored in a variety of published material until a complete picture is produced. Accessing the information source was more difficult and was waste of time. But now by means of technology, the time for finding people and information is reduced and range of accessible information has increased via e-mails, world wide web, file transfer protocol, commercial information services and so on (Fleming, 2000; Russel, 2016: 151).

Because much of the information in cyberspace is increasingly bypassing the traditional journalism phases as new gathering, selecting and disseminating: some scholars, since early years of world wide web, suggested that technological progress is a threat to traditional journalism (Herbert, 2001: 8; Newhagen and Levy, 1998). However, some others have insisted on that technology will help the journalism and the negative effect will be minimal. "It is the same journalism but with better tools". By new technologies journalism now can become self-reflective and self-critical (Friend and Singer, 2016).

Once the professional boundaries of journalism were broken by the internet, the obligations of traditional journalism no longer kept the audience together. On the contrary, people started to meet in the blogs and social media channels as politically active and independent “citizen journalists”. Feeling that news media no longer honest in information for the public sphere, citizen journalists are attempting to take over its role in collecting and presenting information needed for public debate. What they try to do is closing the gap by taking the professionalism out of journalism and returning it to the people. Thus, citizen journalism is an attempt to move news media functions into the public sphere, to connect journalism directly to the debates among the people but as helpers toward resolution, not as leaders (Barlow, 2007: 180). Thus, citizen journalism is about the digital age which has changed the journalism in various aspects. Journalists no more rely on “the man on the street” but on the man online (Priest, 1998), therefore citizen journalism refers to a wide range of activities in which everyday people contribute information or commentary about news stories and epitomizes the belief that the experiences of people personally involved with an issue present a different picture of events that can be derived from the perspective of an outsider. It forces contributors to think objectively, asking probing questions and working to understand the context (Citizen Journalism, 2007).

On the other hand, the internet has destroyed traditional controls enjoyed by elites (McNair, 1998: 141). New media, which is identified with computer usage for distribution and exhibition rather than production (Manovich, 2006), provided a wide range of activities to people. All kinds of documents, news and information can be found easily through internet by citizens. People from their home, office or wherever they are can take part in discussion lists and newsgroups. Thus, they can update themselves and stay in touch with intellectual and politics of daily life. Accordingly, they do set up websites, blogs, write the news, find the online reporters, photographers and keep on the online communication around their online newspapers (Herbert, 2000: 3).

In traditional journalism, the production of news for each story may involve several people. Here the reporter, in fact, has a limited or relatively small role. However, in citizen journalism news production involves more people. Many people from many computers may contribute to production process at different levels. Of course, the rules and the classic design of journalism change in citizen journalism. In traditional journalism, at the end, we see one or two journalists' name but in citizen journalism, the writers are many (Burns, 2002: 37). “The

idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others” (Glaser, 2006). Online information services affected the narrative form of the individual news story, what news covers and general context of journalism. Traditional journalism has started to lose its former influence as old-fashioned reporting from the ground is about dying and citizen journalism has enormous potential (Telegraph Online, 2008). The whole debate is about the convergence of computers and storytelling. This union has created a radically new technology which fundamentally has altered the relationship between the writer and news story (Koch, 1991: 65).

Online journalism has opened the way for the citizen journalism since it gave people the possibility for active participation in news dissemination and criticising. Citizens are interested in online journalism as it easy to access and it has the potential to pick the best of newspapers, magazines, and television. Interactivity, special contents, personal usefulness are some other features of online journalism which attract audiences to contribute and create “citizen journalism” (Carlson, 2003). Moreover, it has increased the communication between professionals and citizens which at the end of the day help citizens to learn the rules of news production. Subsequently, because citizen journalism provides news and information for mainstream media via rapid growth of micro/macro-blogging, it is now an alternative to the mainstream media (Nel et al, 2007).

It is possible to extend the roots of “citizen journalism” or to relate it to “zines” and “fanzines”. Zine or fanzine is both names given to “online journals”. The latter one is more social than the first term, as it is nonprofessional online publications which produced by fans of a particular cultural phenomenon as music or football clubs. Zines are self-edited, self-financed, and self-published serials as poetry magazines. They are not corporately financed. They include various types of publications which are written or edited by any number of people. The subjects included are also varied as hobbies, sports, books, popular music and so on (Atton, 2006: 58). Here the similarities of “zines” and *citizen journalism* attract attention. Citizen Journalism is also about the online forms or publications which have been written or edited by many people. It is so difficult to talk about one particular editor or a well-designed task schema. Mostly the readers are writers and it addresses a certain group of people. The subjects might be wider. Writers may talk about politics, culture, and sexuality based on the interests of the followers. Therefore, the content of new media might further be used for *perception*

management or agenda setting as this content has the ability to canalize or direct the readers towards diverse aims including the military ones (Shavit, 2016: 59).

Citizen journalism is what has been set up in the online world or what is directly related to *computer-mediated communication*. This kind of communication is a socially produced *public sphere*. The importance of this space lies in the sense of mobility with which one can move through the social space easily without any obstacle. The mobility in cyber societies is also about changing the status, social role and class regardless of the previous social levels. The citizens of cyberspace come here to see, to be seen, to participate the discussion, for self-determination, to give politic decisions and to communicate their visions to one another (Xie, 2017: 161; Jones, 1995: 17). In this context, citizen journalists are ones who exist in this cyberspace and who cast themselves as journalists of this world. They write, comment, move among classes and contribute to political communication with their politic discourses.

Via citizen journalism, citizens can participate more often in the democratic process either as a live contribution to public access broadcasting or as juries and audiences for political discussion (Ross and Nightangale, 2003). Those “cyber forums” allow viewers to comment on or criticise how a subject was covered on newspapers and televisions. Involving these discussions between individuals with a shared area of interest, citizen journalists typically take the form of an extended text-based conversation between multiple individuals (Burnett and Marshall, 2003). The contributions at these online newsgroups linked by date posted, subjects and responses for previous posts. Those newsgroups are generally very egalitarian in composition as they usually do not have an exact hierarchy except the moderator whose role is essential to see that discussion stay on topic and remain as civil as possible. This provides a contribution of multitude voices to discussions (Robertson et al, 2017). However, moderators in these groups cannot always act as authorities since it may get quite difficult to control the discussion. Weblogs, blogs, social media groups and news webs are some those newsgroups. They are more like an online diary where participants can find more links to necessary materials. Yet, some media organizations who are aware of the online forums maintain their own weblogs around specific issues and they do not allow the issue to go way off (Kawamoto, 2003; Campbell, 2004: 254).

Especially after 9/11, blogs in America and worldwide have increased. As a base for citizen journalism and its contribution to political communication, people on blogs started to get their political news and discuss the political controversies of the day (Blanton and Kegley,

2017). In this regard, blog movement reflects the internet and the citizen journalism itself. The structure is not hierarchical but connective. The power comes from the individual participator not through planning or the decisions of an elite but from the opportunity. Success in the blogs and other social media channels comes from being at the right time at the right place. A successful blogger, social media user or commenter; constantly writes and make contacts through the blogs, expand readership and invites others into his/her own (Barlow, 2007: 155).

3. Public Contribution to Political Communication: Citizen Journalism

The role of journalism in the political process has been a subject of public debate and a focus on political struggle. Depending on the nature of the political regime in power, journalists and the government have had different kinds of relations. Sometimes they have been punished sometimes awarded. Political communication today, when the relationship between politics, democracy, and journalism has intensified, seem to very much taking advantage of news production process. This course in which the production of specific news stories is structured through contribution of the politicians, requires free and independent journalists at the end of the process is capable of shaping the public opinion (Lippman, 2007), where newsmakers mediate between people and their representatives and help them to choose between different policies (Sparks, 1997). Because the newspapers consider what the communication consultants of the political parties tell, politicians usually do their best to upgrade the relations with journalists as media particularly journalism coverage of political process shape public and political agendas (McNair, 2000: 29).

Nowadays and more in future, newspapers are replaced by interactive bulletins. This new media courses, particularly *smartphones mediated communication* may undo the damage which the old media caused. This seems to contribute political life and may hail a rebirth of democratic life as new public spheres opened and the technology-based interactivity allowed social actors to find joint political interests. People now are actively accessing information and giving feedback. Through this new media technologies, people are able to contribute democratic debates and thereby they resolve the perceived crisis of participation in liberal democracies. Thus, political communication is more active, and the passive reception of the information has been replaced by active discovery. Politicians hence are supposed to respond this active participation. Otherwise, they will be replaced by more direct representation of citizens' preferences and interests (Lilleker, 2016: 110; Tambini et al, 1998).

Political journalism; also because of social media courses such as facebook and twitter, became more focused on the style of politics and the performance aspects of political communication. Politics is now easier to talk about because sometimes it is covered as an entertainment event; politicians are the singer and the party colors are lights of the ambiance. Therefore, journalists invite all citizens/readers to join this showbiz. The citizens usually accept this invitation since they can see prime ministers on chat-shows and they can also vocalize to party leaders as journalists. Although sometimes the sounds mix, it does not harm the ambiance as it is already noisy. Citizens can join the parties from anywhere without any difficulty and they can comment on what they see, can report from where they are and can write stories using their linguistic abilities (McNair, 2000: 177). So that, they can play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news as a normal a journalist and can get feedback from what he/she has done which is called *citizen journalism*.

On the other hand, online resources empowered 21st-century journalists and public people (Marien, 2006). Electronic democracy has enhanced citizen participation in the political process either as supporters or oppositions (Oates, 2008: 179). The rapid convergence of information and communication technologies has revitalized citizen-based political communication. It offers largely an indirect forum for political participation through the use of internet more actively, as writing and editing news and discussing on the diverse means of new media courses. Hence, opportunities for more direct participation in mediated politics have increased in recent years by means of citizen journalism (Campbell, 2004: 190).

In point of fact, in mid-1980s several American local governments started to use communication technologies in order to increase citizen participation and to upgrade delivery of services. Since then, some other local governments did this to resuscitate declining citizen participation in political life (Tsagarousianou, 1998). The computer-based interactions facilitate the formation of collective action and structure the political communication process. Schmidtke, from 1998, indicated the five main aspects which can be identified regarding citizen journalism and how it contributes to political communication (Schmidtke, 1998):

- The new media reduce the costs for collective actors
- Reduce individuals' costs for engagement and participation
- Reduce the hierarchy and intensify the actors' sense of involvement
- The new media facilitate the formation of collective identity
- It is effective in suggesting the strength and prospects of a collective actor

The idea of the "informed citizen" has always been central to the functioning of democracies. People of this century are educated in order to prepare them for political participation by governments (Ross and Nightingale, 2003). Because the citizens must always be held account to the government and because the democracy is based on active participation by citizens in the social and political life, it is vital to inform the citizens about the decisions of the government and the affairs of society. This might be both via journalism or governmental efforts. In this regard, media, in other words, has been cliché-style, "the lifeblood of democracies" which will provide functioning of healthy democratic systems. Currently, this importance emerges within online participation of citizens in political debates and communications (Chinnasamy, 2017; Roeh et al, 1997). As the turnout of political participation in liberal democracies in recent years has declined in terms of voting, membership of political parties or civic associations, citizen journalism is expected to produce active political citizenship while educating people to meet basic political requirements for a technological democracy (Barry, 2006). In this context, Barlow orders the ways how citizen journalism contribute to political communication as follows (2007: 133):

- Provides a free arena to discuss any subject
- Bring citizen and politicians together
- Covers the issues about the current politics
- Conducts focus groups with voters to establish their concerns
- Forms citizen panels to consult at different stages of campaign
- Seeks questions from readers and viewers for use when interviewing candidates
- Reports largely issues developed through citizen contact
- Provides information to help citizens become involved in the political process in ways other than voting

Media organizations are supposed to assist the democratic process by means of providing a public contribution to the politics (Curran, 1997; Altschull, 1995: 33). Presently, media can do this with citizen journalism and civil liberty finds a wider place for itself in a changing technological context. People can set up public forums, platforms and control the content. Nevertheless, while new media tools become vehicles of democratic discourse, a growth of an unabridged right of citizens to speak without control may be endangered (Pool, 2006; Marien, 2006).

Indisputably, the close and strong relation between media professionals and the politicians, causes them to collaborate in persuading their audiences. Therefore, they carefully follow the language and the contents the other part customs. Accordingly, journalists perform an important role in the negotiable use of political communication. They are not only intermediaries between the government and the voters or they are not just the collectors and the disseminators of information; but they are in fact among the different members of the same government. They also form a public debate which is essential for the social order (Barber, 2006). Hence, people try to access to the journalists to convey what they want the politicians to acknowledge or they themselves become “citizen journalists” in order to be a member of the state and to contribute to the daily politics. Therefore, Unlike the thought that political communication connects horizontally various elite groups, here political communication connects the elite and the citizen vertically (Esser et al, 2016; Mancini, 1997).

The growing literature on public access broadcasting and other opportunities for citizens to involve political process and facilitating opportunities for citizens to talk to politicians suggest that, not only many citizens are more interested in political communication, but they appreciate the mediated spaces online or on other tools, which offered them to more actively engage in the democratic process. Thus, citizen journalism as part of new media can perform a positive role in democratic and undemocratic societies –as censorship can be overcome through the internet- through empowering communities by democratic information and political participation.

4. Conclusion: Stuck in the Dilemma

Beyond any doubt, technology caused a major media revolution. This metamorphosis opened doors for a more immediate and pervasive electronic media. Keeping its influence alive, now causing a new media revolution and it is about to change fundamentally the meaning of media. Media no longer means the traditional forms of television, journalism, radio or magazines. Particularly journalism, whose basic capacities and functions are rooted in technology, has evolved alongside the emergence of new information and communications technologies. Many things we know within the group of media have changed and the suppliers are trying to catch this fast alteration. The old models are no longer applied. A new *information age* is underway which is also shaped by the readers'/audiences' participation. Newspapers and news television outlets want their readers to contribute their news production without professional skill. Although the definition of citizen journalism is still problematic and not a

completed process; the question which should be asked about journalism whether traditional or citizen, if people are journalists, traditional journalism is about to lose its authority and influence poli-social culture?

It is not difficult to assume that, the relationship between journalism and political communication will be stronger whilst citizens can also contribute the political debates. As a matter of fact, the whole process is about *the cyber society* which is related to computer-mediated communication. As cyber individuals we can fly in and out of societies, appear in social media courses, joining discussion groups, mailing lists, newsgroups and other network “hangouts”. We as citizens can now make news and distribute it globally, an act that was once the province of established journalists and media companies. While we are doing this in the "public sphere" of the online world, we also reduce and encode our identities as words on a screen, decode and unpack the identities of others. The way we use words, the stories we tell about ourselves is what determines our identities in cyberspace. Thus, we also determine the nature of the collective culture which can be related to political communication in technological politics.

Whilst political communication gains another direction with the technological progress, people of this progressive century can easily communicate with the politicians and the politicians should consider the public much more than before as this will be in aid of them. In this regard, the politicians of this century should be more careful with designing their communication strategies and should keep in with technological progress well since it will be the easiest way to access to the electors. However, there are some questions to be asked in future years. What will people do with the information which they can easily access? Is there an optimal upper or lower limit of the quantity of information flowing in a society?

The usage of new communication technologies for democracy and political communication is a striking feature. Although the online participation is increasing day by day, the overwhelming majority of people and politician are still skeptical about the supposed politic promise of computer-based networks. There is at the present little enthusiasm about active involvement of the citizens in the political decision-making process. Essentially, this skeptical attitude is valid for all kinds of online performances. However, better to indicate that citizen journalism is a positive step for political participation and this is a chance for democratic renewal. Computer-based forms of communication influence the way which geographically dispersed people can communicate with each other and engage in political responsibility. This

is not expensive and does not cause waste of much time. Nevertheless, political actors should more involve in computer-based interaction and political parties, not underestimating the online activities, should organize in a better way for the new media courses to attract voters.

As a last input; modernity is defined politically through the institutionalization of democracy and civilization of technology. Presently, the online media is not only the source of information but also is a way of political and social participation. However, as there are still problems of internet access and heated debates censorship in online platforms, it is difficult to predict about future of democracy and political participation whether the progressive technology will contribute or not. But whatever the future will be, we know that we shall live in a society dominated by technology. New technologies can potentially increase communication among citizens; can open ways to reach information and so can present associations to citizens which will enable them to participate in political life. Peoples through citizen journalism will have a voice in the making of political communication and close the big gap between commercial media and citizens. Nevertheless, the debate is still there: Will democracy stay alive if one the following is missing: the quality of the technology, the equitable principles of political institutions or the powerful character of citizens' freedom demands?

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