

## **Digital Citizenship: An Actual Contribution to Theory of Participatory Democracy**

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**ABSTRACT:** *It is possible, no doubt, to observe that the digital era that was actualized in the information society of the 21st century differs genetically in many areas ranging from economy to politics and from science to philosophy. Today, governance, citizenship and democracy carry out a new transformation towards becoming electrolyzed or digitalized in their concepts and practice. It can be stated that information and mass communication tools transformed democracy into e-democracy, citizenship into e-citizenship, and governance into e-governance when leaving issues that require multifaceted solutions such as speed, security, digital division, technology literacy and threats from large data. Digital participation and digital governance of the digital society forces to abandon the concept of modern democracy in which the power is entrusted to the rulers by elections and the rulers are called to account in elections. This enforcement is a similar pressure experienced during the transition from constitutional democracies that restrict powers of the government in favor of people to parliamentary government, from there to pluralist democracy. Digital citizenship means radical differentiation in general in individual-state relationship and in the inner functioning of citizenship concept in private. The old implicit sediments of the absolutist, authoritative and one-sided dominance concepts that continue their existence in modern democracies through individual-state relationship began to melt with the digital activism of the digital citizens. Through the concept of digital citizenship which is product of virtual reality culture derived from reel, mechanical and cybernetic ontologies, but originally differentiated from them, the issues, such as tendencies of rulers being not accounted for, idea of strong center, inactive principle of transparency, tools of restricted freedom of speech, and traditional media's establishment of deeper relationships with the centralized government, evolve into a different solution through digital participation, digital supervision, e-government, social media, internet blogs, virtual tax offices, corporate e-mail, e-commerce, and e-marketing tools.*

**Keywords:** *e-democracy, ballot box, e-citizenship, e-participation, digital citizenship.*

## **Dijital Vatandaşlık: Katılımcı Demokrasi Kuramına Edimsel Bir Katkı**

**ÖZET:** *Hiç şüphesiz 21. yüzyılın bilgi toplumunda edimselleşen dijital çağın kökensel biçimde farklılaştığını, ekonomiden siyasete, bilimden felsefeye kadar birçok alanda gözlemek mümkündür. Bugün yönetim, vatandaşlık ve demokrasi anlayış ve pratiklerinde elektrolize olmaya veya dijitalleşmeye doğru yeni bir dönüşüm gerçekleşmektedir. Hız, güvenlik, dijital uçurum, teknoloji okuryazarlığı, büyük veri tehditleri gibi çok yönlü çözüm gerektiren meseleler bir kenara bırakıldığında, bilişim ve kitle iletişim araçlarının demokrasiyi e-demokrasiye, vatandaşlığı e-vatandaşlığa, yönetimi yönetişim ve e-yönetişime dönüştürdüğü söylenebilir. Dijital toplumun dijital katılım ve dijital yönetimi, yönetenlere yetkilerinin seçimle verildiği, yönetenlerin seçimlerde hesap verdiği modern demokrasi anlayışını terk etmeye zorlamaktadır. Bu zorlama, iktidarın yetkilerini halk lehine sınırlayan meşruti demokrasilere, oradan parlamenter yönetimlere, oradan çoğulcu demokrasilere geçişteki benzer bir baskıdır. Dijital vatandaşlık, genelde birey – devlet ilişkisinde, özelde ise vatandaşlık kavramının iç işleyişinde radikal farklılaşma anlamına gelmektedir. Modern demokrasilerin birey – devlet ilişkisinde mutlakiyetçi, otoriter ve tek yönlü hâkimiyet anlayışlarının varlığını sürdüren eski örtük tortuları, dijital vatandaşların dijital aktivizmiyle birlikte erimeye başlamıştır. Reel, mekanik ve sibernetik ontolojilerden türemiş fakat onlardan kökensel biçimde farklılaşmış sanal gerçeklik kültürünün bir ürünü olan dijital vatandaşlık anlayışıyla birlikte yöneticilerin hesap vermeme eğilimleri, güçlü merkez düşüncesi, etkin olmayan şeffaflık ilkesi, sınırlandırılmış ifade özgürlüğü araçları, merkezi devletle derin ilişkiler kuran geleneksel medya gibi sorunlar, dijital katılım, dijital denetim, e-devlet, sosyal medya, internet blogları, sanal vergi daireleri, kurumsal e-mailler, e-ticaret, e-pazarlama, gibi araçlar yoluyla farklı bir çözüme evrilmektedir.*

**Anahtar sözcükler:** e-demokrasi, seçim sandığı, e-vatandaşlık, e-katılım, dijital vatandaşlık.

### **1. Introduction**

We can state that the web accessed with intelligent technologies, will be the most effective means of creating public awareness and lending an ear to the public's voice for the rulers as well as the ruled in the near future. The wealthy, civil society leaders and media owners participate in the government in representative democracies of modern societies and, on the other hand, individuals become participants as citizens in the participatory democracies of the postmodern societies. Discussions related to citizenship occur generally in the context of participation, government supervision and equality. Non-equalitarian applications and tendencies of the rulers no to be accounted for are attempted to be minimized in democracies. Solutions can be found to some problems of democracy in today's virtual community. For example, virtual communities can provide equalitarian and active participation as well as contribute to the establishment of a democratic discourse (See Dağı 2006). In this context, it is necessary for revealing the origin of citizenship as a form of relationship, differences between traditional and digital citizenship, socio-technical conditions of digital citizenship, cognitive and psycho-motor skills of digital citizens, some

misunderstandings related to the concept of citizenship and accessed democratic gains. Virtuality, digital culture and online activities, and analysis of critical and analytical approach deserve academic attention.

## 2. Origin of Citizenship as a Form of Relationship

There are different forms of relationships between people living together. Citizenship is only one form of these relationships. It refers to the relationship between the individual and the state. According to many mythologies, power and moral authority is specific to some people and is a God-given gift. Famous philosopher Confucius, who lived in China in the 6th century B.C., was one of the first people to refuse mythologies that suggest the transcendence of the state, the power and the morality (Kindersley 2011:37 ). As Confucius informed in his book called *Analekt*, people are the representatives of the Sky selected for embodying of its own will and transporting the world to the moral order. A virtuous man, who indicates the summit of the moral life, is not only a person in the top of the social hierarchy, but is anyone who understands his place in the hierarchy and embraces this. The virtue of loyalty, which is necessary for social welfare, is actualized in social stratification (Yang and Tamney 2011:90-91). There are different forms of relationships that provide social stratification. These are;

- i. *Ruler – subject relationship*: Rulers must be charitable and subjects must be loyal.
- ii. *Father – son relationship*: Parent must be loving and child must be obedient.
- iii. *Husband – wife relationship*: Husband must be fair and kind and spouses must be understanding.
- iv. *Senior brother – younger brother relationship*: Senior brother must be kind and younger brother must be respectful.
- v. *Friend – friend relationship*: The one who is older by age must be thoughtful and the one who is younger must be respectable (Kindersley 2011:38 ).

Two of these relationship forms have vertical hierarchies and one has a horizontal organization. Vertical hierarchical organization is either towards from top to bottom or bottom to top. From the relationship forms suggested by Confucius, only friend-friend relationship takes place in a horizontal plane that contains mutual interaction. Others are in the form of vertical organization that contains one-way interaction. Horizontal organization relationships require the existence of mutually-dependent two equal agents at ontological and ethical level. Here, the duties and responsibilities are reciprocal.

In modern sense, the concept of “citizenship” has emerged only in democratic governments. The community of people subjected to a transcendental government, such as pariah, subject, slaves and serfs had been previously mentioned (See for vassal culture, Özpölat 2009:113). The relationship forms of vertical hierarchies are outcome of absolutist, authoritative and one-directional dominance concepts. Rulers in modern democracies were selected only by

elections and the elected government reigns until the next election. The representation of citizenship in modern democracy inherited from French revolution. This inheritance including Ancient Greece' democracy describes citizenships by an approach of binary oppositions. According to first of these, citizenship is a task and responsibility which is accepted wantingly or proudly. According to latter, citizenship is a position (status), a warranty, right or system of rights used in their passive mode. It is needless to say, today's democracies take first part as essential ground. In this part, it is ignored the participatory and active dimension of citizenship (Dağtaş 2007:256). However, modern representative democracy style has become outdated.

Digital citizens of the virtual community contribute to the democratization of everyday political life, corporate organization and relationship forms without waiting for the periodic festivals of democracy (i.e., elections). Because it is considered to be insufficient for today's democracy determining the government stuffs via periodic elections (Dursun 2001:7).

### **3. from Traditional Citizenship to Digital Citizenship**

Citizenship is the status bestowed by a state to its people at equal level. The concept of traditional citizenship is bipolar: individual-state polarization and right-duty polarization. This definition, also taught in textbooks, does not reflect mutual interaction, but reflects a "traditional citizenship concept" in which state and duties are dominant and primary and the citizens and the freedom are passive and secondary. Digital citizenship, in the traditional sense, has led to a number of changes, some of which are listed below.

Bipolar definition refers to one-sided domination and condescension of the state in autocratic and totalitarian societies. The primary qualities, like rights, supreme, holy, father, soul and essence, all belong to the state. It imposes tasks and responsibilities on its citizens with its great and profound affection, rights and freedom and its subtle and sharp sword. This government has the force to become the subject that is central, effective, active and competent and to become an object that is not competent in itself but under the protection and guarantee of the state (See Üstüner and Keyman 2012:42 about structure of central government).

State protects its citizens against their enemies, and provides them an identity that satisfies the need for sense of belonging, food, water, roads and an ideal that they will live and die for. Even if they are equal among themselves, citizens primarily protect the honor and dignity of the state. Public is an appendix that is attached to the state. Citizens have become active and competent with the increasing opportunities and types of participation. Citizens are freed from the necessity of waiting for elections to show their reactions and support. In addition, state, for citizens, serves the function of a 'tool' that facilitates everyday life and

regulates the social life in modern societies in which multi-culturalism and diversity had become widespread.

The tradition concept of citizen primarily indicates a person who has duties and responsibilities. Demands for participatory democracy propose to save government mechanism which favors rulers and disfavors the ruled from becoming bipolar. Effective and immediate participation tools do not cause individual-state relations of citizens to be in the form of cause-effect (diachronical) which refers to before and after on chronological line, but to make them aware that it is realized in the form of multifaceted and mutual instantaneous interaction (synchronical) on a ground. Thus, citizens begin to see themselves not as secondary and passive, but as a subject that creates, transform and maintains social life and achieve a kind of self-awareness. The unjustified area of freedom of the state has narrowed and that of citizen has expanded. Here, we can observe the presence of a dichotomy. Democratic states have expanded right and freedom areas of the citizens mandatorily, but imposed new duties and responsibilities and new digital restrictions to citizens that have never been on the agenda in order to prevent increasing complexities and threats. The imperative relation between state and citizen that is usually against citizens has risen to a level of interaction in virtual communities.

There is a structural analogy between the central government and the tools of traditional media. Traditional media has one center and transmits the information towards multiple consumers through one-channel. This uni-directional flow both informs the public unidirectionally and increases the power of the central authority. Multi-centered and multifaceted communication transforms into an interaction and the abundance of centers makes it possible to see everyone and everything as environment. The simultaneous and multi-channeled flow of transmission from the periphery to the center and from the center to periphery also indicates the weakening of autocracy that feeds from bureaucracy. The mass created by traditional media gives place to the network society created by the internet. Traditional governments acquired the habit of controlling the communication channels in order to govern the public. Web-based communications and social media channels appear to be outside the control of both governments and traditional media managers.

#### **4. Technological and Social Conditions of Digital Citizenship**

True transformation of the concept of citizenship was possible by the established virtuality in information and communication. Thus, digital citizenship is a socio-technical phenomenon. Digital citizen has cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills related to digital (numeric) and virtual world. Digital world is a simulation of the real world. Simulation itself and its experience are virtual, but its effects are real and leave an impression of “as if”. It is educational, transformative and predictive and it does not necessarily depend on the real world. Digital citizen is a part of the ideal that attempts to reach the wisdom of the virtual

world. All citizens of democratic countries are not been digitized. Cultural, technological, economic and social conditions accompany the digitalization of citizenship or digital citizenship is not a post-modern concept of democracy peculiar only to all democratic countries.

#### **4.1. Virtual world and web society**

These two are different from each other. Electronic technology-based virtual society is a prerequisite for network society that is a product of smart technology. While network society refers to internet-based social networks, the virtual society refers to a community that is equipped with information and communication technologies, accompanied by bright displays and filled with second-hands objects. Virtual world indicates a simulation universe filled with light, sound, effects, screen and quick-flowing frames and provides a perception of “as if”. Filled with active and effective homologous systems in which original and imitation substitute each other, virtual world emerges by the reproduction of reality and causes the displacement of the current reality. Therefore, it is based on a more ontological background. In the network society which is a sociological term, eliminating the need for social organizations, real spaces and simultaneous presence for communities and groups comes into question. Network community, which emerged as an inevitable fact for people and institutions in 2000s, refers to the expansion of an internet-based communication and interaction network in a late stage of virtual community.

**4.2. Smart technologies, Interactivity and digital lifestyle:** The objective ground of mutual interaction for digital citizen is convergent smart technologies with internet connection. The interaction between the near and far individuals occurs via these attributes such as interactivity, synchronization, multimedia and hypertextuality present by smart technologies (Binatlı 2011:15). Hardware and software of smart technologies are common, cheap, powerful and useful in digital culture. Adults of Y generation and young people of Z generation lead a mobilized life equipped with smart technology. Especially young people of Z generation spent most of their time and works in front of the virtual screens of the smart devices which can be synchronized with each other. The youth, who has this lifestyle, exhibits an inclination for less hierarchy, more participation, less restrictions, more freedom, equality, independence, decentralization, argumentative spirit, uncertainty and having no ideology.

### **5. Psycho-dynamics of Digital Citizen**

Ability to understand the attitude, behavior and expectations of digital citizen is possible to transfer the problem to the context of key concepts such as virtual world, digital culture, network society, smart technology and internet. Having the citizenship identity of only one country comes to mean the direct possession of rights, freedom, duties and responsibilities

that were determine by the law of that country. Citizenship (nationality) is not fundamental, and can be changed, but becoming stateless is considered as violation of a human right. Mostly seen in the virtual world of the internet, digital citizen can use the rights arising from citizenship and fulfill their civic duties by using their credentials. However, anyone who uses the internet is not digital citizens. Distinguishing characteristics of digital citizen are described below.

### **5.1. Technologically-literate**

Digital citizens are certainly technologically literate. They have the knowledge of hardware and software as well as the skills to use machinery and electronic technology. They also use technology and internet for every possible task and process. Digital citizen refers to smart and mobile information technologies for communication, following national and global agenda, sensitivity to global problems, recognizing discrimination, tasks in government offices, communication, correspondence, civil society organization, shopping, banking and marketing.

### **5.2. Perceived realities of virtual world and digital culture**

He/she realizes that a virtual world in which real world is being simulated and a digital culture related to this world are being created and expanded. He/she is especially in a dialectical relationship with smart mobile devices and “more” demand that was brought along with the symbiotic relationship of people. For example, faster, smaller, more precise, and more esthetical devices provide him/her newer, more perfect, more exciting, less dangerous and more enveloping experience. Everything nearby continues to be digitized and they are either a new digital product (object) or a newly digitized analogous output. And everything is recorded by digital devices (Işıklı, 2014). Digital citizens are sensitive about ethical, epistemic and legal problem caused by recording everything.

### **5.3. Has Deep Internet Notion**

It is clear when discussing digital citizenship that we speak about a world in which internet connection can be provided from all necessary or desirable points. Internet has more meaning and function than being the gate of a virtual universe that only reduces time and space or being a hosting servant. Attributions that define the Internet are included in its content and function. Internet environment is defined by speed, connection, organization, communication skills, interaction, control, management, supervision, and design, sharing and content wealth. S/he frequently and intensely uses digital platform and analogous databases like electronic documents and library in research and academic studies. The substantial of researchers in digital culture work in the fields such as internet, social media, digital communication, commerce diplomacy and publishing. Therefore, Internet, for academicians, is transformed both into a platform for information sharing and information access and source of knowledge and information, in other words, into a research object. S/he

is equipped with knowledge and skills to use the internet for conducting an effective search in the internet, obtaining results, filtering results and for new information to become public. Even though it is not widespread, s/he can use rights and freedom in virtual environment. Electronic devices with the screen accompany the digital citizen by using citizenship right such as science, work, entertainment and travel.

#### **5.4. Knows digital communication laws and secure communication**

Every action, carried out by digital identities or fake accounts, points to its performer as a result. S/he is knowledgeable about access restriction, publication bans, presenting and consuming forbidden content (child pornography, hacker, hazardous materials, etc), national security violations, alienation, hate speech, rights and freedom violations. He/she also knows digital rights and practices them: writing blogs, commenting on the news, correspondence, criticism, conducting trade, receiving training, creating groups, being a member to a group, creating and closing an account, and ensuring the safety of personal data taken from institutions providing hosting services... He/she knows about copyrights. Pricing system for the digital codes of the work has to be developed. In which conditions free digital nationalization should be determined (Dedeoğlu 2006: 113-125).

#### **5.5. A Moral Object with Knowledge of communication**

In general, Information ethics includes the rulers that all internet users and the principles that all personal computer users should be obey (Tingöy 2009:186). Digital citizen is a moral person that freely makes his/her digital preferences. He/she is faced with many choices while being online. He/she has the courage, talent and responsibility to be able to choose one of the options. Responsibility for confirming every checkboxes, clicking each icon, visiting each website and entering every password belongs to him. He/she undertakes digital responsibility. He is a free-willed real individual of the virtual world. He has the freedom to choose in virtual actions and therefore, he is responsible. He knows that he can receive damages from others and inflict harm to others while being online. Legal obligations in profit and loss belong to him. There is a digital law legislation which he/she complied necessarily and there are digital ethical principles that he/she is expected to observe voluntarily. Discussions on digital preference, digital responsibility, cyber bullying, cyber-attacks, etc., come to mean that digital citizen is morally responsible and legally liable.

#### **5.6. An active social media user**

Digital citizen has social networking accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Instagram, but the distinctive nature of the digital citizen is not being an active user of social media, it is his/her style of using social media. It is a new way of paying attention to local, national and global issues and performing politics, art, literature, science and philosophy as a citizen. And works and procedures, which we carry out here, are activities that can be added to our personal career as well as do not seem to come before us as crime



and punishment. It is a fact that social media is an integral part of the digital identity and makes our identity and personality becomes visible. This visibility and recognition have something to do with our sharing of much data from our real social environment.

### **5.7. Aware of debates on digital respect and privacy**

The ethical and legal status of internet logs, surveillance camera, mobile phone, voice recording devices and hidden camera recordings are being discussed. A person's voice and display can be argued to be private to the person against surveillance and all kinds of unauthorized recordings. It can be said that recordings of someone can be made without permission, and whether or not no unauthorized recordings can be used in favor or against should be attributed to a rule. All kinds of degrading and humiliating, insult, sign, symbol, recording etc. transmissions should be given a legal status like in real relationships. Person, behind the screen, is not an outsider whether he/she is real or fake and they are all equal citizens. Because users are real even if their accounts are fake and internet is still being used by real people.

### **5.7. Is participant and supports the demand for participatory democracy**

Two opportunities of increasing participation have already been created. First, citizens can be informed about decisions that have already been taken or will be taken on social administration in a very short time. Secondly, citizens can convey their opinions on the decision that has already been taken or will be taken, without spending much time and meeting with the natural stern face of the state and in more free and fast way. These two opportunities that support participation should be understood within the context of concepts such as transparency, interactivity, instant communication, and electronic feedback channels that are kept open. Communication has been facilitated on the occasion of opportunities represented by information and communication Technologies. Official procedures have been automated and thus much duplication prevented. The data which scattered and difficult to access became regular and systematic. The reservation and accessing of official data and information became easy. Therefore, the effectiveness and productivity of official work of the state have increased. States and governments that using Internet became more fast, more transparency, more responsible for his acting on citizenship (Şahin etc. 2004:256).

Digital citizen is continually encouraged and heartened for "participation" and is met with new opportunities. Participating in a social network, joining somebody's network, writing an opinion, making a comment, liking a transmission and voting digital surveys, etc. These force citizens to participate in a digital environment. Digital environments are created and carry on with voluntary participation. You are not asked to write a petition and explain your reason for leaving. Participating in a group or abandoning it is voluntary and free. Governments, which shows a strong tendency to record every recordable step of the citizen, can analyze sharing accumulated in large digital databases (image, video, statement, quote,

opinion, like, accessed site, content read, time spent online, consumed products, etc.) and learn political views of the citizens. Following and interpreting traces of digital citizen is an effective prediction method for politicians, decision-makers and marketers.

## **6. Practices and Extent of Digital Citizenship**

### **6.1. Establishing multifaceted communication**

The new structure of online communication channels allows “one to one”, “one-to-many” and “multiple” communications. Multiple communications allow online groups to be freed from space and time and transmission to reach to a large number of concerned in a short time.

### **6.2. Rapid coordination, gathering and dispersing through instant messaging**

Digital citizens use paid online or free, but relatively cheap and absolutely fast sharing services such as Twitter, Whatsapp, SMS, etc. Thus protesting digital citizens can be established quickly and dispersed quickly and can transfer responses to national and global public quickly in the same way. We can say that becoming online will be a natural reflex for entertainment, learning, communication, consumption, production and being known and visible.

### **6.3. Continuous supervision of the government**

Active digital citizens of network society follow every step of their governments, have this felt and do not wait for ballot boxes to be installed for showing their reactions. A government, which will be organized by free elections and results from the polls, can be called a reduced democracy. The governmental staff, elected for a certain period of time, influence voters with their performances in periods close to election time and prevent elections to be rational-pragmatic. The reaction of the voters, who postpone them for elections, decreases by the effect of changing agenda as well as time and will be able to generate a meaningful effect of a government for the period of 3-4 years on the final year of the elections at best. Inclinations of rulers for not giving an account can be prevented by practices such as showing momentary reactions, strengthening of civil organizations, decreased dependence on the state for some important issues, reduction of dependence in ballot box, and popularization of transparency and citizen journalism. Many events that are not included in national agenda but make citizens suffer attract the attention of the citizens who continue their lives equipped with digital devices. Citizens with smart phones that can be online are able to transport local events to the national agenda more quickly than professional journalists.

#### 6.4. Social media gossips

When considering the increase in the number of users and creating an alternative power for traditional media, social media is likely to cease to be a luxury for decision-makers and citizens. Social media sharings, internet blogs and news coverage have dual effect in terms of politics. On the one hand, rulers that follow these mediums are able to follow the public agenda and can learn their instantly changing expectations, concerns and curiosities. Citizens also become aware of the private lives, their expenses and leisure activities of the rulers and show their emotional and political reactions in the same way. This closes the space-temporal gap between the ruler and the ruled bidirectional and suggests an interactive, dynamic, cautious and accountable political life. This means that politicians who acquired the status of decision-maker by the choice of the public are continuously kept under constant surveillance. Web and traditional media cannot be compared in terms of trivial thought and gossip. Because, the web does not have any filters.

#### 6.5. e-state applications and digital equality

e-state applications recognize citizens not with their physical existence, but with their virtual identities (See Armağan 2013:18). Identities of the used machinery and internet provider also accompany this identity. Citizen does not come across with public buildings and civil servants, meets with stern, sulky and discriminative face of neither buildings nor officials, its dignity, wealth and physical competence cease to be an advantage or disadvantage and experience a digital equality when online. Physical obstacles cease to be a handicap in access to public services provided online. E-state allows the state to reach its citizens in the virtual world and the adaptation of the state for virtuality. It comes to mean the digitalization of the state.

Digitalized citizen encounters with corporate or virtual characters in the virtual world. There is no chance to meet either with the cold-faced buildings of the real state, stern-faced officials or real people in the community. Physical obstacle of the digital citizen, slurred speech, lack of confidence, educational level become invisible in the virtual world, but obtain a nature of mutual relationship in an ethical plane. Digital citizen carries out an act not with his/her observable strong or weak attributes, but with perhaps invisible and absolutely equal IP and ID (citizenship identification number). Nobody can see it, cannot insult it and ignores it. A disabled, poor and uneducated citizen appear equal with other citizens in the virtual world.

#### 6.6. e-learning, education at a distance, online teaching

Diversifying and expanding online teaching and learning activities contribute to the solution of a number of problems related to planning of time and space, strengthen equality of opportunity in education and increase international interaction.

## **7. Benefits Brought by Digital Citizenship**

### **7.1. Virtual expansion of digital public space and civil society**

A new dimension has been added to the real society and physical universe with digitalization: virtuality. Now there is more room for movement and more opportunities for participating in society without leaving the house have been actualized.

### **7.2. The increase in horizontal organization**

It can be seen that virtual groups whose numbers increase every day lack virtual hierarchy. Horizontal organization increases interaction between members, exchange of information, cooperation and activities (Kırık and Ozcan 2014:62 ), and contributes to corporate democratization.

### **7.3. Strengthening of globalization**

The locality began to spread quickly enough for the first time in the agenda. Opportunities for local agenda to become national or even global agenda have been increased. Global pressure of the international community emerges against the practices of the local governments. And global issues can affect local governments positively or negatively.

### **7.4. Anonymization**

Activists and protestor citizens are being followed by the security forces in many countries of the world since they bother governments. The absence of mandatory presence of real subjects on the internet allows the activists to show reactions but to hide their identities and thus to become anonymous. Although anonymous identities cause some predictable side effects, they also give the opportunity to criticize openly, fearlessly and bravely.

### **7.5. The weakening of decentralization and central government concept**

It is observed that decision-making processes have moved away from centralization in the digital culture. Process with the center is multifaceted. On the one hand, the reputation of the existing centers is being damaged, lost and trivialized and, on the other hand, new alternative homologous centers begin to emerge. The center loses its uniqueness and thus become decentralized. We are faced with a multiplicity of centers today. Autocratic attitudes of the central government are shattered with the participation of multiple actors in the decision-making processes. The concepts of hierarchy, power and leadership around the term “center” give way to democratic leadership.

### **7.6. Cure for cumbersome bureaucracy**

Smart and online communication technologies have led to a revolutionary transformation in security, efficiency and speed of in-house and inter-institutional communications. Non-

dynamic transfer-transmission power of the paper was removed from becoming a moderating obstacle in online communication and messages begin to be transmitted to the destination in the speed of light and by exposure to less entropy. Dependence on space and paper has already been minimized in some sectors and office-based official type operations give way to mobile-operations that enable working at home, travel and on vacation. There are only two things needed for this: first a device with an internet connection and second a modem, in other words, internet access.

### 7.7. Public policies with multiple actors

Citizens can participate indirectly and restrictively in the decision-making processes in representative democracies (Dursun 2001). The most common technique of indirect participation is elections. In fact, elections, which take place in every 3-5 years, are limited, unclear or estimated participation to the decision-making processes. They only provide citizens the opportunity to determine policies, but not the opportunity to participate in policy-making. It is never possible to predict exactly which decisions will the elected politicians take and which policies will they create. While political leaders, media, power groups, civil society organizations and international pressure groups influence the decision-making processes after the elections, individual citizens who will be directly affected from the decision taken, cannot participate in the process. However, it is thought that citizen will be able to predict what decisions will the politicians, who he/she elected while casting vote in the elections, take by referring to party programs and election promises. But, he/she is also aware that he/she will remain ignorant or uninterested in significant number of decisions taken after the elections. An interesting point here is simply this: while other organizations, outside of the citizens as individuals, continue to influence decision even after the election, the participation of the individuals is preserved from one election to another.

Digital citizen is more advantageous than the traditional citizen in relation to participation to policy and decision making processes. Here, we are talking about the facilitation simplification, acceleration and increase of individual participation to the policy making process by means of internet-based interactive communication technologies (Bkz. Nacak 2014:103). Thus, the policy-making process becomes multi-actored. Issues that will create policies can be discussed extensively in social media and the internet, citizens can state their opinions and adequate data can be presented (Of course it is possible for decision-makers to ignore the virtual community). It can be stated that the concept of creating central policy-making in the form of taking decisions concerning many citizens by a small number of decision-maker has weakened and the policy-making process has become multi-actored through digital technology-supported participatory democracy concept.

Citizen's path for the right to legal remedies against injustices suffered at the hands of people or the state being clear and participation in the government and decision-making processes are two different categories. Citizen's statement of opinion when his/her opinion is asked

remains outside the participation to the decision-making process. Opinion pools or referendums cannot be considered as the active participation of the citizens. The active participation of digital citizen refers to his/her deliberate participation to this process from the period of starting the decision-taking process until the decision is taken. Large piles of data that decision-makers must take into account have already been created. Virtual environments have become huge databases consisting of e-mail contents, transaction types, internet searches, e-consumer objects, e-memberships, mobile applications used, frequently-used contents and news commentary. Citizen opinions, tendencies, expectations and desires can be revealed from large databases through data-mining process. Citizen's choice can be reflected in policies. We can hope so.

## **8. Misunderstandings and pending issues**

Digital citizenship is a concept derived to meet a new phenomenon. It has not yet been revealed clearly. Naturally, it is not free from some confusions and inaccurate conceptualizations. For example, digital citizens are considered to be always critical against governments, organized via social media, emerged from the protests, addicted to the internet and especially to social networks or deprived of reading habits. Although some of these descriptions are true, they are observed to be false.

### **8.1. The exponential increase in the effect is not specific to virtual communities**

It is misleading to present the transformation of digital activities started with a person into a mass movement as if it was a situation specific to smart mobile communication. There was also a center of many social movements before the digital age and it was spread in waves. As a result, the phenomenon of spreading to surroundings from the center is not genetic, but historical. Besides, the digital age displays a strong tendency to decentralization.

### **8.2. The strong influence of the traditional definitions continues**

Definition, roles and responsibilities of digital citizenship cannot start. It was defined in the context of duties against the state in many texts. Digital citizenship phenomenon cannot be reduced to citizen's use of internet in order to fulfill his/her duties against the state. On the contrary, internet was initially accepted as an area of rights and freedom. The digitalization of the state and of the government is a later development.

### **8.3. Digital world is also censored**

The internet or social media freedom of the countries depends strictly on their general political culture. In other words, the internet does not convert the country that it has entered into a democracy by a hokey pokey. In addition, there is no unconditional freedom on the

internet. Internet blogs, social media, instant communication platforms, news and video sites can be under the control or the pressures of the governments and the states.

#### **8.4. Digital gap indicates the continuation of social stratification**

Attempts to bridge the digital gap are discussed in the context of fair distribution of income or increasing gross national product. It is not possible to state that all of the citizens have smart communication technologies and engage in online activities. Social stratification is already reflected in the internet access and technology literacy. Cases, such as disability, poverty, gender, age, geography, education etc., are decisive in the digitization of the citizens. Differences cannot be said to be no longer disadvantageous when internet access and virtual community activities are concerned. Human rights had been declared for real people and societies. Now, we can expect the universal declaration of human rights to be converted into the universal declaration of digital human rights.

#### **8.5. Continuation of actual notary reduces the value of online activity**

Many important tasks performed in a virtual environment are needed to be notified by real people. Taking a printout of the performed task does not seem to be enough.

#### **8.6. The equation of “digital citizen =social media user “is not incorrect**

Digital citizen uses the social media but all social media users do not meet the criteria for digital citizenship. Digital citizens are not people who stay online more. He/she is a person who can perform operations in a country by using smart electronic devices and the internet that can only be performed or are needed to be performed by his/her true identity card.

#### **8.7. Causes an everyday life not “anti-social”, but more intense “e-social”**

Traditional communication and interaction had been occurring with people in nearby physical environment. Everyone who can be online is at an equal distance for digital individual and is only “just a click away”. Interaction with several people simultaneously and at the same time can be possible in virtual environments. There is no obligation to come together for maintaining the friendship or the relationship. Many citizens, who meet with very few people in the real life, may be in contact with many of his/her friends and with familiar or unfamiliar people through social networking sites. Communication with thousands of people can be maintained. This is not an anti-social, but an e-social life.

#### **8.8. Digitally-born people have not abandoned their habit of reading**

Digital culture has created a different reading-research habit and has provided a quick and frequent habit of reading in short but in very different topics. It is true that the habit of reading from printed materials like books has been slowly abandoned. But, this does not mean that digital citizen does not read but, has begun reading electronic texts.

## 9. Conclusion

The relationship forms between the individual and the state have gone through several phases. Everyone has the right to equal citizenship in today's democratic societies (as opposed to Athenian democracy). This equality includes the rights and freedoms as well as duties and responsibilities. Even if the legal equality is ensured, it is difficult to say that socio-economic equality is provided by everyone. In addition, there are several controversial cases that violate the equality in the ruler-the ruled relationship in favor of the ruler but against the ruled. Digital citizenship has new practices that reduce inequality among citizens as well as between the ruler and the ruled. In this respect, it is a suitable ground for the transition from representative democracy to participatory democracy. Participatory democracy relies on the notion of governance (Tekeli 2004:21). Digital citizens have begun to be included in the process of government by outrunning election periods. Thus, both citizens become more active and responsible and governments become more transparent, accountable and pluralistic.

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