

AN INVESTIGATION ABOUT THE EXAGGERATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A FLUID FORM OF MODERNISM*

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ABSTRACT

The world keeps turning, but faster than ever. However, one of the contributory acts of this situation is definitely social media which came into people's life seven years ago. Social media becomes a recreation of oneself and a *raison d'être*. Although the titans of social media does not know which road to follow in the beginning, the context of the sites as Face book and YouTube is shaped through the requests of the users. In case of the Twitter still attracts the great attention since from the first day.

The social networking sites which are come into effect in the later of 2006 and in the beginning of 2007, nowadays mediate most of the protests of era. First, in 2009 Iran election period protests show how the power of social media usage began to emerge on the scene. After that, this time events in Tunis broke out and spread all over the Arabian world, protest took place in almost 15 countries. In 2010 the events were namely "Arab Spring" was broken out. And again during those days teenagers came together through their social media communication. Moreover, after the reactionary events both in Iran and Arab World, the usage of social media surprised the West and also in a way inspired them because till that moment social media has never been used like this. After the Tunis and Arab Spring events, the social media especially Twitter showed its power again. After these, in 2013 "Gezi Parkı" instance broke out. It started on 27th of May and continued till 25th of June. Everything is started by the protests of a small group of environmentalists to prevent the lumbering of the trees. How this simple protest causes to become a national and international phenomena. First days, it is given in some of the TV channels and newspapers but the protests gain importance with the usage of Twitter in order to define what is happening in Gezi Parkı.

Nevertheless, in 2009 social media revolution occurred. Whole world saw the real power of social media which was called as "the most powerful force of the era" two years ago. Modern era's communication network enables youth to communicate and get together to react and take a stand. Therefore, the role of social media in social cases adds a new dimension to the general use of the medium (<http://www.medyam.com/sosyal-medyanin-toplumsal-olaylardaki-yeri/>).

The changing world and the contributory acts of social media to this situation make us to think the relation between the social media and these social cases. So the purpose of this paper is, to present the differences between the "old media" and "new media" by looking through the evolution of media; define what constitutes Web 1.0 and Web 2.0; what sort of innovations does social media (which is included in Web 2.0) present and

especially Twitter, what makes Twitter different among the other social media forms; how these social media tools are used in social cases; to analyze “Gezi Parkı” instance in terms of social media. Moreover, this analysis also contains that whether Twitter can be considered as a new public sphere in terms of Habermas thinking or not? Can Twitter create a democratic society or can Twitter provide sphere of equality and independence.

Key Words: Social Media, Twitter, Gezi Parkı Case

MODERNİZMİN SIVI FORMU OLARAK SOSYAL MEDYA ABARTISI HAKKINDA BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZ

2013 yılında gerçekleşen “Gezi Parkı” eylemleri sırasında sosyal medya kullanımının etkileri incelenmiş ve “liquid modernity / sıvı demokrasi” çağında sosyal medyanın başat/ana akım medyadan bağımsız kamuoyu oluşumunda çok etkili olduğu şeklindeki söylemin doğruluğu incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak sosyal medyanın siyasetin şekillenmesinde ana akım medya olmaksızın çok da etkili olamadığı bulgusuna ulaşılmış ve makalenin isminden de anlaşılacağı üzere “sosyal medya abartısı” şeklinde nitelendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal medya, Twitter, Gezi Parkı Vakası

Information and communication technologies are involved in the powers that shaped the 21st century. These technologies change the people’s living, learning and working; and enable interaction among people. So these conditions change both the individual and social life and brought on economic, social, cultural and political outcomes (Yeni Medya ve Kamu Diplomasisi Aktörü Olarak BYEGM, 2013, 25).

Communication technologies have a greater past when compared with the computer technologies. It does not take so long to be realized that electric is an ideal technique in information transmission, so the usage of electric in telecommunication has 150 years past. During this process in each 20 year period novelties in communication area come up: towards 1850’s telegraph, between 1858 and 1880’s telephone, towards 1900’s transmission with electromagnetic waves, between 1920 and 1930’s radio, between 1950 and 1960’s development of television technologies and lastly starting from 1970’s the usage of New Media technologies started (Aytekin, 2012, 103).

In 1970’s concept of New Media is proposed by the researchers who are conducted studies on information and communication. However, in 1990’s the meaning has changed with the improvements in computer and internet technologies and gains a distinct meaning (Aytekin, 2012, 103).

The first thing that comes to mind with the concept of media is newspaper, magazine, radio and television. Today, these are named as traditional media because technologic innovations and internet change the forms of

mediums and create a concept of New Media. There are many studies which discuss the differences between the Traditional/Old Media and New Media: Lister discusses the digital traits of New Media, Fidler describes New Media as change in form or transfiguration, Manovich states the trait of numerical value that New Media has, McQuail underlies the interactivity of New Media. The common point of these studies is the traits of New Media are; interactivity, modularity, being digital and hypertext (Yengin, 2012, 126).

Along with the new technological revolution it can be said that it gives a start to a new social era. New communication technologies considered as a tool to achieve participatory democracy because of its aspects; to raise the level of information, to enable individual communication, interaction and universal access opportunity. Karagöz (2013, 134) cited Underwood discusses the democratization effect of new communication tools and states that “the reason why internet been preferred, it gives opportunity to users to benefit the democratic nature of internet ‘many-to-many’ rather than the traditional media companies’ totalitarian structure ‘one-to-many’”. The portrayer of this new society is “network society”. Network society means everybody can connect anywhere and everywhere. The most discriminating feature of network society is two way communications, in other words interaction (Karagöz, 2013, 134).

Interaction refers to main feature of New Media and precisely what makes New Media “new”. Interaction is the multi way communication between the sender and the receiver, and among the receivers (Aytekin, 2012, 106). Aytekin (2012, 107) cites Livingstone (2004) with the new information and communication technologies a new communication model shows oneself: “many-to-many”.

“Social” is defined as the act being social or socializing, “Media” in general refers to a means of mass communication such as newspaper, magazine, radio station, television network or website; thus “Social Media” refers socializing through the means of media (Levy, 2013). Social media is considered as a grand and active communication which embodies continually flow of information (Aytekin, 2012, 111).

Social Media, with the development of Web 2.0 a shift is occurred from one-way communication to interactive virtual world. In company with this development people whose aim is to exchange information, to meet with people sharing common ideas or working in similar jobs started to come together through the social network sites (Kartal, 2013, 160). Web 2.0 is first used by Tim O’Reilly in 2004, “which has social based means and technologies and is defined as a second generation web platform in which users can also develop content; cooperate with each other and which supports the information and idea exchange between the users” (McLoughlin and Lee, 2010). Dan Gilmor calls the world of Web 2.0 as the world of “we the media”, stating it is a world of “former audience” not the world of few people who are in the back rooms and decide what is important (O’Reilly, 2007, 27).

With the progress of new technologies, new applications for share (YouTube, Flickr, Slide share) new services for communication, cooperation and content management and/or production (wiki, blog, twitter) and applications that connect many people and support different societies (face book, elgg and ning) emerged (Aytekin, 2012, 107).

As Face Book, Twitter, YouTube, social networking sites provide a new public sphere by gathering numerous people and used as new agora where the opponent voices can rise. This New Media sphere makes possible to organize people in order to set their opponent ideas and trigger activist movements (Karagöz, 2013, 132). This new social and activist movements become a regular part of our democracy and activists use social networks and new media tools when presenting the common reactions on non-democratic issues, ecopolitics which is imposed by the dominant system. As a result, the most crucial role of New Media is to create new representations and give a chance to be noticed the opponent political ideas (Karagöz, 2013, 132).

As Rheingold (1993) states social media mediums not only being the place of where personal communication held on, but also they reflect the trait of Internet as being a public sphere. For instance, Twitter can be a place where the meeting point of the protestors who oppose to Iran elections; Twitter can be the first mass communication medium that Barack Obama announce himself as a candidate; or it can become a network of support to Haiti people who suffer from earthquake (<http://www.sosyalmedyaha.com/2011/10/25/akademik-calisma-twitter-gundelik-yasamin-yeni-rutini-%E2%80%9Cpit-pit-net%E2%80%9D/>); or it can be a place of communication network which enables youth to communicate and get together to react and take a stand in Gezi Parkı Case.

Twitter

Twitter is a web application founded by San Francisco Podcast Company in 2006. Twitter's main aim is to enable people to share what they heard, experienced or thought in a web environment with short expressions. The distinctive trait of Twitter is users have only 140 characters to express themselves so that it is easy to write and read. According to Sagolla who is one of the creators of Twitter states that Twitter is an easy to create and it is for short and explicit expressions. Because of this form Twitter can be used by different domains and this carries Twitter to the area of politics, economics and culture (<http://www.sosyalmedyaha.com/2011/10/25/akademik-calisma-twitter-gundelik-yasamin-yeni-rutini-%E2%80%9Cpit-pit-net%E2%80%9D/>).

Twitter has the traits of being dynamic, explicit, up-to-date and informative (Aytekin, 2012, 113). According to a study there a primarily four user profile groups in Twitter which is; Social Media Professionals, Celebrities, Digital Activists and Personal Users.

Figure 1: General User Profile Groups in Twitter



Source:<http://www.sosyalmedyahaber.com/2011/10/25/akademik-calisma-twitter-gundelik-yasamin-yeni-rutini-%E2%80%9Cpit-pit-net%E2%80%9D/>

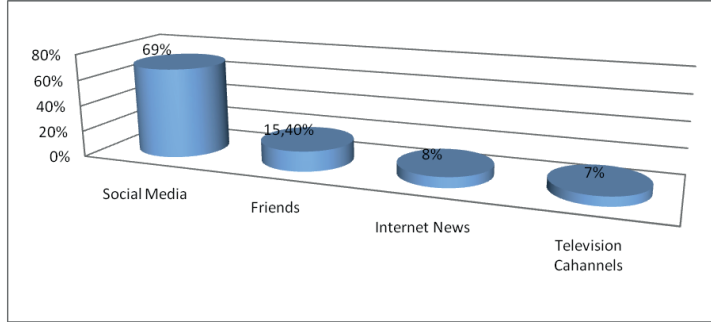
Report prepared by Monitera and Webrazzi, stated that the Twitter user rates around the world rises %55 when compared to 2012 rates. Moreover, the increase rate in Turkey is %33. In 2012, there are 7.2 million users but this number rises 9.6 million people in 2013 February. (<http://www4.cnnturk.com/2013/bilim.teknoloji/sosyal.medya/02/13/iste.twitter.turkiye.istatistikleri/696288.0/>). However, after the Gezi Parkı event it is stated by the “Alternative Informatics Association” that the user rates of social media in Turkey increases. According to the 2013 TUIK data, %73.2 people who have access to Internet use it in order to take a part in social media. The remarkable point in the data is social media usage is %72.1 in city, whereas in rural area it is %78.3. Thus, Turkey is placed at the top in the social media usage around the world. The numerical values which are gathered by Financial Times and published by Webrazzi stated that Twitter has a common usage among the internet users in Turkey. According to these data, Twitter user rate is 11,337,505 of the population of 36,455,000 internet users. This datum is the final one after the Gezi Parkı Protests in Turkey (http://www.alternatifbilisim.org/wiki/T%C3%BCrkiye'de_%C4%B0internet'in_2013_Durumu). According to these reports, Twitter user rates are increased approximately 1, 8 million people after the Gezi Parkı Protests.

Twitter and Gezi Parkı Case

In 2013 “Gezi Parkı” instance broke out. It started on 27th of May and continued till 25th of June. Everything is started by the protests of a small group of environmentalists to prevent the lumbering of the trees. How this simple protest causes to become a national and international phenomena. First days, it is given in some of the TV channels and newspapers but the protests gain importance with the usage of Twitter in order to define what is happening in Gezi Parkı. Everything is started on the third day (29th May 2013) of the events the rigid statements of government made teenagers to incline the usage of social media, twitter. Twitter becomes

number one communication tool and afterwards crowd start to gather in the park (Kongar and Küçükkaya, 2013, 101).

Research is done by the academicians of Bilgi University and it is published on habervesaire.com. The research states that people get information about the events through social media and especially twitter. Thus, the answer of “How people get information about the Gezi Parkı Events?” is absolutely through twitter.



Source: Küçükkaya, E. K. (2013). Gezi Direnişi: Türkiye'yi Sarsan Otuz Gün. İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları.(p.33)

Moreover, according to a research which is conducted by New York University Social Media and Political Participation Laboratory stated the fact that on 31st May 2013 between the hours 16:00 and 00:00 2 million tweets delivered about the Gezi Parkı event. Laboratory defines the twitter usage map of Turkey during the Gezi Parkı events. Furthermore, the results indicate that Twitter user rate in Turkey is much higher when compared with the other countries under the same conditions. The tweets that are delivered from Turkey named as “extraordinary” and “unique” and also indicated %90 of the tweets written by Turkish citizens (http://www.alternatifbilisim.org/wiki/T%C3%BCrkiye'de_%C4%B0nternet'in_2013_Durumu).

Public Sphere

Habermas defines public sphere as “we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy” (Habermas, 1964, 49). Moreover, Habermas states that “To be sure, state authority is usually considered “public” authority, but it derives its task of caring for the well-being of all citizens primarily from this aspect of the public sphere” (Habermas, 1964, 49)..

Habermas, in a way stating public sphere as the gathering point of the citizens and it should be different from the political public sphere and the good of citizens should be considered.

The public sphere concept is being presented by Habermas indicated public sphere as the platform where individuals can discuss the issues liberally. In democratic societies, public sphere is the place of both the liberty and distinctness. In a democratic public sphere it is assumed that the source of political legitimacy is formed by the individuals and the society. In democratic societies public sphere is the place where the political process is defined; individuals, groups and companies are in competition; and basic liberty and rights organised. In short, public sphere is the place of equality, liberty and distinctness. In democracies people's right of liberty and distinctness are not the rights for only private life, however, in democratic societies these rights are given to individuals (Ideolojik Kamusal Alan Krizi, 3-4).

In general perspective, public sphere represents both the government and the public who are gathered to discuss their issues. Indeed, it is the place in which from different perspectives, level of education, socio-economic income, politic views come together to oppose the dominant public domain through a common point (<http://dushanesi.wordpress.com/2013/06/22/kamusal-alan-nedir-neden-onemlidir/>).

Conclusion

In this paper, it is tried to clarify the differences between the Old/Traditional Media and New Media and what triggers transition from Old Media to New Media. Moreover, the New Media tools (Computers, Internet, WWW, Social Media-twitter, face book, blog, pintrest,...) are defined and tried to analyze how twitter started to play an important role in the protests of Gezi Parkı events.

The tools of New Media and especially Social Media is seen as ease in access, low entry barriers, many people can reach the information, more often used medium and ease in access to the information, no restriction of time and place. Many theorists assume Internet and the mediums it creates can give a "potential configuration of public debates" and it can be the "idealized participatory model of the public sphere" (Gerhards and Schafer, 2009, 12-13). Tools of New Media always seen as a having a democratization effect on the society because it fosters participation of the citizens.

However, this case also shows the fact that new media cannot be totally alive without the mediums of traditional media. Thus, in a way, people also realise the protests and what is happening at Gezi Parkı through TV channel and then people start to react through the social media tools. In a way, the messages conveyed by its tools need to be once again announced by the traditional media.

So this brings to mind that is it possible to think social media stands alone and to reach crowd and be heard by many people and convey your message only through new media tools?

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