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DEMOCRACY, PARTICIPATION AND TECHNOLOGY: THE PARADOXES OF DEMOCRACY IN TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

Direct democracy was inherited from Ancient Greece while today's representative democracy is a by-product of the Industrial Revolution. The technological innovations of the post-industrial era led the representative democracy to spread worldwide. The introduction of new communication technologies initiated the arguments on the possibility of the re-employment of direct democracy. Undoubtedly, new communication technologies had the roles of moulding public opinion and raising public awareness. Nevertheless, the reality that these technologies pose some dangers to societies cannot be denied. In this sense, it was seen that new communication technologies put democracy into a paradoxical process. Two different approaches have been used to explain the relationship between democracy and technology: techno-septic and techno-optimist approaches. In this research, the relationship between democracy and technology was studied particularly with the techno-septic-centred approach. Starting from this point of view, the negative effects of technology on democracy were put under the scope and several solutions were offered in the study. Within this direction, the objective of endeavour in this study is to present the paradoxes of democracy within technology and solution proposals.

Keywords: Democracy, Technology, New Communication Technologies, Paradox.

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Demokrasi, Katılım ve Teknoloji: Demokrasinin Teknoloji Paradoksları

Özet

Doğrudan demokrasi antik Yunan'dan miras kalmıştır ancak bugünün temsili demokrasisi Sanayi Devrimi'nin ürünüdür. Sanayi Devrimi'nden sonra gelen teknolojik yenilikler, temsili demokrasinin dünya coğrafyasına yayılmasına neden olmuştur. Yeni iletişim teknolojileri ile beraber temsili demokrasiden doğrudan demokrasiye tekrar geçilebileceği tartışmaları yapılmaya başlanmıştır. Yeni iletişim teknolojilerinin şüphesiz ki, kamuoyu oluşturma ve halkı bilinçlendirmede rolleri vardır. Ancak bu teknolojilerin toplumları bazı tehlikelerle yüz yüze getirdiği de bir gerçektir. Bu bağlamda, yeni iletişim teknolojilerinin demokrasiyi paradoksal bir sürece soktuğu açıkça görülmektedir. Demokrasi ve teknoloji ilişkisini açıklamakta tekno-septik ve tekno-optimist olmak üzere iki farklı yaklaşım bulunmaktadır. Burada özellikle tekno-septik yaklaşım merkezinde demokrasi ve teknoloji arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Buradan hareketle teknolojinin demokrasiye yaptığı olumsuz katkılar mercek altına alınmış ve en nihayetinde bu olumsuz katkıların önüne geçilebilmesi için birtakım öneriler getirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu minvalde bu çalışmanın amacı, demokrasinin teknoloji paradokslarını ortaya koymak ve çözüm önerileri getirmeye çalışmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demokrasi, Teknoloji, Yeni İletişim Teknolojileri, Paradoks.

INTRODUCTION

Since Ancient Greece, the only society to experience democracy has been a modern society. In Ancient Greece, it was easy to sustain democracy due to the shortage in the number of citizens in police states. Yet in early-modern and modern societies, over-population and day by day increase in the number of citizens made it impossible to maintain democracy. Amidst these impossibilities, representative democracy was adopted, and this situation continued to subsist until the introduction of new communication technologies.

The introduction of new communication technologies initiated the arguments that democracy could be re-employed. The possibility of instant access to knowledge in the literal-auditory-visual sense that was brought through new communication technologies gave rise to the arguments about "direct democracy", "participatory democracy" and "agora".

Concordantly, in today's world, with geographies of the world getting closer to each other and with speed of information flow reaching the maximum level (Maalouf, 2009:69), direct democracy no longer appears to be a dream. Owing to the increase in the number of users of mobile technologies and the

placement of democratic conscience in public memory, the dream of direct democracy seems to be a possible quality that is beyond regimes.

Nonetheless, technology becoming technologism (Habermas, 2004: 69-71) and the emergence of a technocratic class, the problems of incompatibility between democracy and technology in practical terms and the identity crisis concomitant of rapid social changes have all been putting democracy under threat and revealing the paradoxes of democracy in technology.

Today, when the new communication technologies are paving the way for a standardized society (Aydın, 2002:18-19), technology, which gave rise to democracy, now can be the cause of the corrosion in democracy and lead it to vanish. In this context, techno-optimists ' interpretations that completely reconcile and harmonize democracy and new communication technologies (particularly mobile phones and the Internet) and democracy prevent people from looking at these technologies from a different perspective and eliminating their negative effects. In this article, the existence of communication technologies, their consistency, comprehensiveness, their positive and negative effects on democracy and their ability to maintain maximum participation will be evaluated within the scope of the techno-septic approach. And finally, solutions will be proposed concerning the problems that stem from the communication technologies, even if the transition from a long-termed representative democracy to direct democracy or participatory democracy is not possible with these new technologies. Before bringing forward proposals, the paradoxes of democracy in technology ought to be mentioned.

PARADOX 1: THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY AS A TECHNICAL TERM

Ancient Greek Civilization is the first example of the concept of western democracy.[*] In those times, Western Thought, which pushed the boundaries of Dark Ages and scholasticism, found its long-awaited" Golden Age" image in Ancient Greece (Ateş, 1976:21). What formed the essence of the ancient Greek democracy, which is considered to be the world's Golden Age was Athenian Democracy. Athenian Democracy set a real example of participatory and direct democracy. On the other hand, democracy in Athenian Democracy, rather than being a technical term as in today's example, was seen as a feeling and excitement

[*] As is known, the concept of democracy is explained regarding Ancient Greek Civilization. However, the name of a community of people who are called "Phaeacians" was mentioned in Homer's work, Odyssey. Homer is estimated to have lived during 9 or 8 BC. In this context, Phaecians serve as a complete model of democracy according to Homer's expressions. Eventually, Phaecians' situation ought to be considered as a contrast to the known history (Homer, 2011:230-233).

that were experienced (Ateş, 1976: 21-22). According to Aristotle, it is the spirit of democracy that lies beneath strong government structures and practices [...] (Tannenbaum & Schultz, 2007: 86; Nancy, 2010: 33). The indication here is that it is vital to evaluate democracy as an ideal by preventing it from remaining between ideal and empirical (Sartori, 1993: 6-9).

Democracy refers to the intellect, philosophy, lifestyle, belief and particularly the spirit of society. This spirit includes the general beliefs and opinions of society. It is this spirit that embraces all the members of society with their opinions from the poorest to the richest and from the unique to the most ordinary and pushes away negative feelings and intentions. When viewed from this aspect, the inclusiveness quality of democracy ought to be mentioned. Thus, this definition of democracy could be made: "Democracy is reciprocally proportionate to the numbers of others in a society..." (Keane, 2010). With the appearance of new communication technologies (the Internet, mobile phones, etc.), the spirit of democracy has lost its essence and drifted into the virtual world. New communication technologies have put a global garment on democracy. This garment turned democracy into a technical term and formed the idea that it was possible to maintain direct democracy by creating virtual agoras in the virtual world. Agora of Athens, which was the place where discussions on police administration were made, yielded its place to online forums and social media sites. At this stage, the dynamic of a new virtual public arena emerged. Nevertheless, as Habermas claimed, even though the core of the public arena is hereafter formed by new communication technologies (Habermas, 1997:76), mass media, monopolized by advertisements and public relations, has leaked into the world of politics and started to colonize this field as well since the beginning of the 20th Century. In this scene, which was illustrated by Habermas, the integrity of citizens as a community disappears and citizens become individuals that are disabled to participate in politics and made feel that it is not necessary to participate, except for the elections (Habermas, 1997: 365). Consequently, the conversion of democracy into a technical term and the wiry ropes, the telephone cables, and the optical fibre cables as its coverings, all contradict with the ideal spirit of democracy. According to the American Supreme Court, this gives damage to " the spirit of democracy that basically needs to be protected." As can be seen, the evaluation of democracy merely as a technical term creates a huge paradox. Besides, studying the paradox that was created by the belief that participation in democracy was increased with the introduction of new communication technologies could ease the understanding of the main thesis of the study.

PARADOX 2: TECHNOLOGY AND MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION

There are various definitions of democracy. According to Heywood, democracy means governance by the public; therefore, it includes both participation and administration in the public interest (Heywood, 2006: 97). On the other hand, in another definition, " What democracy means is not the supreme political power that is centered in one hand (one person or in the centre) but it is the organizational form which means that the power is distributed within the society (Köker, 2008:103). It would not be appropriate to say that there is a consensus on the concretization of the concept. Yet, Robert A. Dahl's five main criteria, all of which obtained consensus, were listed as equal votes, right to information, right to have the final say, participation of adults and active participation (Dahl, 2001: 40).

It was claimed that new communication technologies, when evaluated within these five criteria, were very effective and that they maximized the political communication. According to this techno-optimist approach, with new communication technologies, political participation reached its peak, and the situation of every individual shifted from being apolitical to political. To illustrate, there is a widespread claim of active participation with the use of the Internet. As reported by Dahlgren, the Internet provides democracy with various benefits. The first and the most important one of these benefits is that it increases the level of political communication (Dahlgren, 2003: 147-162). By using the Internet, people started to show great interest in politics. The greatest gain of the political parties here is that they can introduce their candidates in their web addresses (Karaçor, 2009: 121-131) and they can make propaganda through the Internet.

It is obvious that new communication technologies and particularly the Internet fulfil the duty of forming public opinion. Undoubtedly, there is a great deal of improvement in collecting, sharing and accessing information when compared to the past. Additionally, these technologies build a bridge between local administrations and the public as far as public services are concerned. However, it would not be quite right to limit the situation with these. As a matter of fact, in almost all of the studies that were carried about the new communication technologies, it was discussed that these technologies increased communication and maintained political participation (Timisi, 2002:207). On the other hand, looking at the study on the participation rates of general and local elections that constitute the greatest part of political participation, it can be claimed that this rate partly declined instead of increasing, and in spite of showing a few units of increase, democratic satisfaction could not be maintained.

Table 1.

General and Local Elections in Turkey and Voter Participation Rates (%) (Arıkboğa, 1998: 65; DİE, 1995: 91-95; tüik.gov.tr)

1950	89,3	1963	77,6
1954	**88,6**	**1968**	**65,7**
1957	76,6	1973	61,7
1961	**81,4**	**1977**	**60,4**
1965	71,3	1984	91,1
1969	**64,3**	**1989**	**81,5**
1973	66,8	1994	92,2
1977	**72,4**	**1999**	**85,4**
1983	92,3	2004	73,9
1987	**93,3**	**2009**	**85,9**
1991	83,9	2014	89.00
1995	**85,2**	**2019**	**84.67**
1999	87,1		
2002	**79,1**		
2007	84,2		
2011	**83,16**		
2016-I	83.30		
2016-II	**87.60**		

Looking at Table 1,[†] it can be seen that while the average of participation rates in the first four elections (1950-1961) was 83.99%, in the second period of four elections (1965-1977), the average rate of participation declined to 68.70%. However, in the third period of four elections, the average participation level went

[†] Participation rates in general and local elections should be evaluated individually, according to the conditions of the country where the elections are held, as the diplomatic cultures of all the countries are different and unique. Studying the political life in Turkey within this context, it can be claimed that did not reflect general and local election participation rates lacked the correct social standards in some years of election. In other words, these figures did not reflect the decision in the public's memory. In addition to this, when democracy is evaluated in ideal format, it is obvious that the idea of maintaining 100% participation does not correspond the idealistic philosophy. However, what is intended to show with the comparisons in this table is that instead of increasing, "participation" rates decreased with new communication technologies and that even though there was no decrease, these technologies did not maintain the changes in the political minds of individuals. As a matter of fact, the relationship between lately modernized societies and new communication technologies was clearly stated by Fukuyama: When democracy is the subject matter, technological development can only bring societies to the door of democracy but technical achievement without ethic improvement can be abused for bad intentions and the situation of humanity worsens (Fukuyama, 2006:16-33).

up to 88.66%. Including 2011 elections (1991-2011), in the last four elections, the average level of participation went down to 83.39%. The average rate of participation of the last two elections that were held in 2016 was 85.45%. As can be seen in the table, the average of participation rates of the elections within the first ten years of 1950-1961 period are higher than the ones in the last ten years. Besides, it can be also be depicted from the table that in 1987 elections, when new communication technologies were not widely used, and in 1954 elections, when these technologies did not even exist, the participation rates were much higher than the ones in the last elections. This situation can be a valid reason to reconsider the assumption that mobile communication tools strengthened the participation and democracy in general elections.

Looking at the table in terms of local elections, it can be detected that in the first four elections (1963-1977), the average of participation rates was 66.35% whereas in the second period of four elections (1984-1999), there was an increase in the average rate of participation, at 87.52%. In contrast, as can be seen in the last local elections of 2004-2019 period, the average participation rates declined to 83.37%. A general trend of increase can be seen in local elections when compared to the first elections. This situation shows that mobile communication tools created local unity and communication network in local sense. However, looking into Table 1 in detail, one can easily see that participation rates reached the maximum level. Despite the existence of mobile communication technologies in these years, the widespread use of these technologies cannot be mentioned. Thus, the first assumption does not appear to be very realistic. Finally, what we can interpret from this situation is that participation, democracy and mobile communication triangle requires to be reexamined.

According to techno-optimists' assumptions, the participation rate should have reached the maximum level after 2000s, granted, the new models of the Internet, mobile phones and other technologies, in short, the new models of technology became widespread in these years. However, looking at Table 1, it can be seen that participation rates were on decline especially after these years. Accordingly, it can be said that the political arguments that were shared in forums and social media sites (Wilhelm, 200: 33) were not carried from "virtual agoras" to real "agoras" and were not reflected in participation rates. As can be seen, the thesis that communication technologies increased the participation creates a great paradox. One additional paradox of democracy in technology is the possibility that new communication technologies are likely to create a chaotic environment. Thus, the destructive relationship between democracy and technology ought to be studied in terms of this paradox.

PARADOX 3: THE ABOLITION OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH DEMOCRATIC WAYS

The invention of the steam engine in 1776 and the start of its use in textile mills in 1785 in England marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Ashton, 1948: 18). After this turning point, the tools of technology and democracy with its patterns of government developed synchronously. In the years after the ideal and intellectual democracy of Ancient Greece, technology laid the foundations of representative democracy. However, with the latest formations of technology; in other words, the new communication technologies, democracy entered into a two-sided paradoxical process. This technology could both pave the way for participatory and direct democracy and present a threat to democracy. Thus, from the techno-septic approach, the abolitionary qualities of technology on democracy can be defined as: (1) New communication technologies, which create an over permissive environment due to the lack of control mechanisms and legal basis, may become the place for subversive and separatist activities besides critical arguments. The racist propagandas can be given as the most obvious example of this situation (Ersöz, 2005:122-129). In addition to this, an emphasis must be laid on the fact that terrorist organizations use these technologies effectively for their activities. (2) Commercial organizations may abuse new communication technologies and aberrant pornography may lead these technologies astray. In such an environment, these technologies will not make a positive contribution to democratic participation and culture; on the contrary, they will cause harm (Aksoy, 200?: 159-170). (3) New communication technologies may lead to a digital divide that defines the inequality in reaching these technologies (Norris, 2001: 53). In this context, the digital divide could bear a resemblance to "Athenian Democracy" in a negative sense. On the one hand, there exists a limited number of elite "Internet citizens" that can reach and use these technologies; on the other hand, masses of slaves and barbarians that are deprived of the sources to reach the same technologies.

Based on these three points of view, it can be seen that the use of new communication technologies without any measures may become a threat to democracy. Besides, according to Stratton, who studied this subject in terms of psycho-sociological and cognitive aspects, the ability of individuals to express their opinions in forums pose a threat to the distinction between public knowledge and personal opinion (Stratton, 2000: 94). Bimber, by using the term "accelerated pluralism", claims that while accessing information swiftly, individuals will not lose self-selectiveness and they may become unable to acquire knowledge about many issues while trying to focus on a few subjects (Bimber, 2002:168-169). Thus, starting from this hypothesis of Bimber, it can be stated that new

communication technologies maintained neither socio-psychologic progress nor democratic improvement in the political environment.

To conclude, it may seem appropriate to point at new communication technologies (without any measures) as a reference to John Adam's conceptualization of "the suicide of democracy". A study on the relationship between democracy and standardization is required so that the conceptualization of the suicide of democracy and accordingly paradoxes of democracy in technology can be understood more clearly.

PARADOX 4: TECHNOLOGISM, THE STANDARDIZATION OF TECHNOLOGISM AND TECHNOCRATIC DILEMMA

According to Tracy, the founder of the science of ideology, ideology is the "science of thought". Despite Tracy's definition, today, in social sciences, ideology is defined as a map for individual and social groups to determine their direction among different socio-political preferences (Öz, 2009: 13). What is defined here as "Technologism" is technology becoming a standardized ideology. Here, the concept, "Technologism" is not used as it includes all the sub-topics of ideology. The purpose of this concept is to call attention to the idea that whereas the road maps of societies show different directions, the ideology of *technologism* is one-way pointing at only one direction (the north or the west). Hence, as Serge Latouche stated, this *technique (technology)*, which is supposed to create abundance and smoothen conflicts, establishes a ground for injustice, violence, and animosity (Latouche, 1993: 147).

Standardization is the most important feature of the ideology, called Technologism. Standardization may lead to the disappearance of political culture, a situation when democracy becomes impossible. This standardization defines a monotype culture and the common ideology of this culture is technologism. Within this vicious circle, the times finally come, when people constitute one public, speak one language and the times when no intentions can be unrealizable. However, the established site counts for nothing. What prevails there are injustice, violence, and animosity. Finally, the site destroys itself.‡ Accordingly, despite the accelerating and facilitating functions of new communication technologies, the above-mentioned self-destructive effects of these technologies cannot be disregarded.

‡ In Serge Latouche's book, The Westernization and the Standardization of the World (1989) Latouche appears to see the end of 2000s. What he meant to say here with the word "site" is the world, becoming a standardized government and a globe of information and the self-destruction of this site with injustice and animosity. Latouche constantly emphasizes that standardization is a vicious circle.

Technocracy leads the ethical and practical dimensions in the processes of individual and social developments to be ignored. In all decision-making processes, experts who are assumed to have objective knowledge appear and the best logical solutions about the future of the society are produced (Erdemir and Koç, 2009: 155-166). According to Habermas, a representative of Frankfurt School and Critical Theory, this phenomenon centralizes the power and instrumentalize intelligence by depriving it of the ability of criticism. In this regard, new communication technologies do not increase participation; in contrast, they instrumentalize and manipulate intellect through the medium of technocracy. In this situation, the public will is not reflected in the government; instead, it falls under the influence of technocracy. In the end, technocracy appears as an oligarchic administration model. While this administration model does not exist juridically, its existence is constantly noticed. As a matter of fact, the absence of oligarchy as a regime does not necessarily mean that there are no regimes that are inclined to oligarchy (Buran, 2009: 69-97).

To conclude, the question of whether new technologies will increase this inclination or not needs reconsideration and necessary measures should be taken. In this context, finally, studying the relationship between the identity crisis that was triggered by technological paradox and democracy will be helpful to understand the main thesis of the study.

PARADOX 5: TECHNOLOGISM AND INDIVIDUAL / SOCIAL IDENTITY CRISIS

To analyse concepts, one should attach their meaning neither to the horizons of idealism nor to the empirical road of ideas (Foucault, 1999: 86). However, remembering the connection points of a concept is a prerequisite for research (Türköne, 2007: IX). Accordingly, the connections of the concept of identity with the individual mind, family, neighbourhood, city, country, culture (technical culture- technology), social class, economic conditions, and religion should not be disregarded.

Identities cannot be given in a short time and they continue to change and form within a lifetime (Maalouf, 2010: 25). Besides, identities are social rather than being individual. For instance, according to Halbwachs, individual memory nourishes on social memory. In this context, individuals form memories by belonging to a social group, especially through affinities with class and religion and this way, they can place memories in their minds and remember them (Connerton, 1999: 60). Hereby, it can be stated that what matters is collective memory and identity.

Democracy, Participation and Technology

The sociological argument that technique, technology (technologism), social differentiation and social specialization bring about chaos is constantly denied (Adorno, 2008: 47). However, the argument that new communication technologies liberate individuals and enable them to control everything around them is losing its validity day by day. The identity crises resulting from these technologies instrumentalize and culturally misinform individuals instead of making them real subjects. In the end, the values of individual and social identity erode and disappear.

The definitions of the role of democracy in individual and social memory that were made by Ancient Greek philosophers, who were the ancestors of democracy, point out the necessity of democratic culture. However, the culture they mentioned is not composed of cultural collectivism. In a funeral utterance, Pericles, by emphasizing the success of Athenians in times of peace and war, states that the main subject to be emphasized is the invisible reality behind the success of the city (Oktay, 2003: 165). According to Pericles, this invisible reality is the order and the naturalness in the relationships of the people who live together. The question is whether technologism, the standard ideology that was created by new communication technologies means the same as Pericles's definition of relational order. All these arguments above reveal the necessity that this question should be reexamined. On the other hand, the truth is the third world countries have internalized the ideology of technologism for the sake of modernism.

According to techno-optimists, this internalization is a sign of improvement. However; the questions to be asked at this point are: Has the appropriateness of these technologies to the cultural codes of individual and social memory been controlled? Have these technologies been accommodated with the cultural codes? Have the required measures been taken against the hazardous effects of these technologies?" These questions might help reach the correct information about the individual-social identity crisis. The effect of technology on the two-thousand and five-hundred-year journey that the world societies made to reach democracy is undoubtedly worth discussing. It is noticeable that new communication technologies, apart from some positive effects, place democracy into a paradoxical process. In conclusion, to complete the study, solutions to paradoxes of technology in a democracy are required to be suggested.

SPECIFIC CONTEXT: SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO RESCUE DEMOCRACY FROM THE PARADOXES OF TECHNOLOGY

In Today's world, it appears to be extremely challenging to apply technology in production, administration, and information systems without being trapped by the paradoxes of technology. However, it is possible to take action to rescue democracy from these paradoxes. Within this context, while it is not possible to maintain participatory and direct democracy with these new communication technologies, the threats for the society's understanding of democracy and political culture could be eliminated, provided several measures are taken.

In order to protect democratic culture and values and rescue democracy from the paradoxes of technology, it is possible to suggest certain solutions to the problems studied in the article. (1) Attention should be paid to determine the appropriateness of the technological formats with the cultural codes of society and prevent any harm to social harmony. In this context, it is required that technological formats are formed under the cultural codes of the society, instead of forming behaviour patterns that are suitable for technology. Thus, technology and the cultural values of the society will be in peace and democratic attitudes and values will be protected and even improved. (2) Individuals must be supplied with pure political information on virtual democratic platforms created by autonomous establishments that are supported by the government and disinformation, partial information and comments should be prevented. In this way, individuals can make their choices comfortably with the information they obtained from these platforms, and their political attitudes will be formed according to their values. The number of these platforms should be increased and to maintain the equality principle of democracy, the public should be provided free Internet service and public authority should play an effective and supportive role in the use of the Internet. (3) The use of digital signature should be extended, and measures should be taken to prevent forgery and fraud. Besides, partial and "terrorist" use of new communication technologies should be controlled cautiously, and such actions should be penalized. All in all, the existence of traditional institutions that suit an individual's cultural habits should be protected. In educational institutions, in media and press organizations, the public should be informed utilizing films, radio and television programmes, and the Internet. In other words, the myth that modernism is the only remedy and that life is impossible without technology should be ended.

Direct democracy should be considered as an inner process rather than a dream. This process first starts in an individual's mind, continues with the family,

the neighbourhood, the city, and from there it spreads to the country and even to the world. There is no magic formula that can raise the level of democracy in an individual or a country. What matters is the protection of the spirit and the values of democracy, maintenance of maximum rate of participation, preservation of individual-social identity and the social values behind them and the efforts to become a good individual and a world citizen. Consequently, Human beings have always been in connection with objects. The great inventions in history might have caused some social negativities and deteriorations. Nevertheless, the essential point is being able to see the law of the instrument. In this context, the ability to see the reality of the new communication technologies can be used as the formula to eliminate the paradoxes of technology in democracy.

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