

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
AND EXPRESSION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IN TURKEY

A Master's Thesis

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August 2013

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AND EXPRESSION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IN TURKEY

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of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BILKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

AUGUST 2013

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ABSTRACT

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We live in a late-modern age characterized by globalization, self-reflexivity and high level of detraditionalization accompanied by the latest developments in the field of communication and information technologies. Besides its economic, social and cultural consequences, such an environment is mostly invested with great potential for realizing participatory democracy. Due to major transformations appeared in both class structure and cultural realm, the politics of late-modern age pursues a form of politics which is beyond left and right and, by a remarkable reformation, it can be called what Anthony Giddens calls a “third way politics”. Therefore, in such an environment, old political practices of participation and expression remain incompatible with social and cultural structure of the late-modern age. Herein, social media as a socialized and horizontal mode of communication, functions as a public space for struggles over power and counter-power especially for the groups who were interpellated as “others” since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in different periods of history. Benefiting from the discussions on the concepts of public sphere, citizenship, democracy and social media, this thesis studies the nature of political participation and expression through social media in Turkey and the potential of social media for being an instance of alternative media deepening democracy.

Keywords: Public Sphere, Democracy, Citizenship, Ötekilerin Postası, Social media

ÖZET

ALTERNATİF MEDYA VE DEMOKRASİ: TÜRKİYE’DE SOSYAL MEDYA ARACILIĞIYLA SİYASİ KATILIM VE DIŞAVURUM

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Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Özlem Savaş

Ağustos 2013

İletişim ve bilgi teknolojileri alanındaki son gelişmelerin, küreselleşmeye, özdeşleşmeye ve yüksek düzeyde gelenekselleşmeden arınmaya eşlik ettiği geç modern dönemde yaşamaktayız. Ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel sonuçlarının yanı sıra, bu ortam, çoğu zaman katılımcı demokrasinin gerçekleşmesi için büyük potansiyel barındırmaktadır. Sınıf yapısında ve kültürel alanda görülen önemli dönüşümler nedeniyle geç modern dönemdeki siyaset, sol/sağ siyasetinin ötesinde, Anthony Giddens tarafından “üçüncü yol siyaseti” olarak tanımlanan bir form izlemektedir. Böyle bir ortamda, eski siyasi katılım ve ifade pratikleri, geç modern dönemin sosyal ve kültürel yapısı ile bağdaşmamaktadır. Bu noktada, bir sosyal ve yatay iletişim formu olarak sosyal medya, özellikle Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin kuruluşundan beri tarihin farklı dönemlerinde “ötekiler” olarak çağrılan grupların iktidar ve karşı-iktidar üzerine mücadeleleri için bir kamusal alan işlevi görmektedir. Bu tez, kamusal alan, vatandaşlık, demokrasi ve sosyal medya kavramları üzerine yapılan tartışmalardan yararlanarak, Türkiye’de sosyal medya aracılığıyla ortaya konan siyasi katılımın ve dışavurumun doğasını ve sosyal medyanın demokrasiyi derinleştiren bir alternatif medya olma potansiyelini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamusal Alan, Demokrasi, Vatandaşlık, Sosyal Medya, Ötekilerin Postası

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family and my grandmother, especially my sister, for their endless support and belief in pursuing my academic interest and the path I tailor for myself.

I would also like to thank my advisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Özlem Savaş for her guidance, encouragement, emotional and academic support who, I believe, remarkably enhanced the quality of my thesis. Moreover, with their excellent criticisms and valuable comments, Assist. Prof. Dr. Dilek Kaya and Assist. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Gürata helped me to realize the potential that I have to be reflected in my future academic studies.

I would also like to thank Alper Özcan for always being there to support me, for his endless patience, for his moral support and for sharing my anxieties. Without his support, this thesis would have never been completed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Political conversations are building blocks of public sphere, and the public sphere is in turn central to discussions on democracy. Although, generally, political discussions that people engage in public sphere have been associated with rational-critical debate and formal politics in line with the modern understanding, in late-modernity, new forms of political participation and expression have come into existence as a result of major transformations in the political structure, new conceptions of citizenship and democracy; and developments in information and communication technologies. Although political actions such as voting or rally attendance are certainly significant to formal democracy, people, in late-modernity, prefer different forms of political engagement. In this context, public sphere has been freed from its institutional context and expanded more to field of communication, and therefore, it is relatively easy to point out the changing nature of political participation and expression through analysing online environments. For this purpose, social media, particularly Facebook, as nearly the most widespread communication channel in cyberspace will be utilized as a means to both picture the nature of new public sphere and structure of political participation and expression.

Moreover, the potential of social media in voicing problems, concerns and demands of excluded and sub-altern groups as a form of alternative media, and encouraging and deepening democracy in Turkey will be among the issues covered in this thesis. In turning its full attention to political conversations and sharings on social media, this study aims to understand the potential of social media in functioning as a form of alternative media democratizing democracy.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer these questions: What are the practices political participation and expression through social media in Turkey? Specifically, how do the people otherised and excluded by dominant discourses in Turkey express and represent themselves through social media? Can social media be considered as an alternative media, which encourage and deepen democracy?

Methodology

The analysis of online environments has necessitated a transformation in the structure of social research. The qualitative online research applied in this study uses the technologies and facilities of Internet by integrating traditional qualitative research methods to the Internet landscape. It is evident that computer-mediated communication requires a different methodological orientation for the researcher. Online qualitative inquiry gained momentum since the late 1990s defined by “breaks from the past, a focus on previously silenced voices, a turn to performance texts, and a concern with moral discourse, with critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation, freedom and community” (Lincoln and Denzin 2000: 1048). Working on a relatively a fluid and dynamic field of research, online researchers as bricoleurs, are continually inventing or piecing together new research tools, fitting

old methods to new problems (Mann and Stewart 2000: 5). Online researchers face with the challenge of inventing reliable and valid methods for studying issues and problems reflected in computer-mediated communication. Further, as Denzin (2004:2) notes, “online bricoleurs fit their methods to concrete problems, and the questions they are asking. The choices of which interpretive practices to apply cannot be set in advance...The online bricoleur is theoretically sophisticated, able to move back and forth through multiple theoretical spaces, from feminism, to critical and queer theory, to Marxism and cultural studies”.

Under such conditions, in this thesis, I follow a case study of a critical discourse analysis approach in handling Ötekilerin Postası (Others’s Post) functioning as an alternative media in Facebook presenting the structure of political participation and expression through social media in Turkey. Since case studies of online contexts, like case studies of offline environments, help to investigate particular interests in depth, the research subject has been analysed by this method. Moreover, political conversations and sharings are studied in terms of the relations between discourse and social, cultural and political developments in Turkey. Although critical discourse analysis is a method applied mostly in traditional social science research, I utilize this method as an effective and reliable means for online research since a great portion of the methods invented for online settings such as computer-mediated critical discourse analysis embodies a language-focused approach (Danet et al. 1997, Cherney 1999, Herring 1999a) underlining lexical choice and online word-formation process and preferring language-focused content analysis. Therefore, online political participation and expression of users overwhelmingly occurring by means of discourses is studied by the critical discourse analysis approach. Although there exist different approaches to critical discourse analysis, I will mainly reflect on

Fairclough's overview. To begin with, the objective of critical discourse analysis is to explain the linguistic-discursive dimension of social and cultural processes and changes in late-modern period. Since discourse also exists in visual images besides written and spoken language, visual images are treated as linguistic texts and interpreted accordingly. Further, discourse refers to a form of social practice constructing the social world and in turn is constructed by it, and therefore, it forms a dialectical relationship with different social dimensions. However, "The discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideals in people's heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social structures" (Fairclough 1992b:66). Critical discourse analysis also prefers to an empirical analysis of language use within a social context. Moreover, discourses are the means for ideology and they function to create and sustain unequal relations of power. For Fairclough (1993:135), critical discourse analysis examine,

Often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts and (b) broader social and cultural structures, relations and processes [...] how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by the relations of power and struggles over power [...] how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

Critical discourse analysis see inevitable nature role of discursive practices in social world and it sees a potential for social change giving way to a society governed by more equal power relations. Thus, with its commitment to social change, critical discourse analysis takes the side of the oppressed and excluded groups by the dominant discourse.

In line with the framework of analysis, the data required for critical discourse analysis were gathered through online non-participant observation between January 1st, 2013 and June 30th, 2013 among the political conversations and sharings

performed in the group page Ötekilerin Postası. Selection of materials was done according to their relations with recent developments seen in Turkish political, social and cultural life, the level of follower participation and the form of expressions of followers. In order not to intervene the structure of written language as a reflection of counter-discourse created by followers, the comments of followers and the notes of editors of the group were left as the way they were shared in the group. Translation of comments from Turkish to English was a quite challenging practice due to radicalized and high-inference language preferred by followers.

Outline

Chapter One provides an introduction, research questions and a brief summary of methodological approach utilized in the thesis.

Chapter Two is a quite comprehensive review of the characteristics of late-modern period and its reflections on new political understanding and new conceptions of citizenship.

Chapter Three describes the structure of new media, and transformative influence of social media and social network sites on political mobilization as a sign of counter-power in late-modern period. Furthermore, discussions on the emergence of a new form of public sphere and democracy are among the topics covered in this chapter.

Chapter Four focuses on the literature on alternative media and its relations to alternative democracies. Moreover, the practices of political participation and expression through are elaborated. The significant elements of Turkish political history are also provided which are necessary for critical discourse analysis.

Chapter Five handles Ötekilerin Postası as a radical example of an alternative media in Facebook and describes the topics covered by the group. In the discussion part, the qualitative inquiry questions the structure of Facebook as a virtual public sphere, Ötekilerin Postası as an alternative media and its potential for deepening of democracy.

Chapter Six offers a conclusion and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

FEATURES OF LATE-MODERN AGE

2.1. Culture of Modernity

Modernity is generally described as the particular way of life and the state of mind of the ones who are experiencing the modern period. It signifies the experience of the economic, social, political, cultural, aesthetic and intellectual life “that implies the progressive economic and administrative rationalization and differentiation of the social world (Weber, Tönnies, Simmel); processes which brought into being the modern capitalist-industrial state” (Featherson 1998: 197-198). Moreover, modernity mostly refers to a period symbolised by the shift from feudalism to capitalism, industrialization, secularization, urbanization and rationalization. Rise of the nation state, and its powerful and well established institutions and particular forms of surveillance are also the distinctive characteristics of modernity. According to Stuart Hall, modern societies can be regarded as “social formations”, namely “societies with a definite structure and a well-defined set of social relations” (Hall, 1992: 7).

Giddens (1990:16) named as “high priest of modernity” by Mestrovic (1998: 2) defines the major characteristics of modernity as the separation of time and space,

disembedding of social systems and reflexive ordering and reordering of social relations. Therefore, major institutions, social relations, social structures and process of self-formation should be analysed in accordance with the features of modernity.

Many great classical sociologists (Marx, Durkheim and Weber) look from different aspects in interpreting the nature of modernity. Marx, to begin with, refers to capitalism and capitalist mode of production as the major transformative force in the modern world. He claims that new order of modernity pursues a capitalistic logic in both economic relations and its related institutions. Followingly, the nature of social, cultural and political realms are also inevitably and profoundly transformed in order to keep up with continuous development and increasing accumulation. Moreover, Weber argues that the core process of modernity is mainly shaped by rationalization giving way to a less magical and disenchanted world in which as tradition is disregarded, science becomes the major authority for knowledge and truth. Weber states that rationalization involves the rise of abstract and principled reasoning, secularization, universalistic claims of instrumental rationality, high level of differentiation in various fields and disciplines such as art and science and lifeworlds, and increasing specialization. As another approach, contrary to Marx, Durkheim traces the nature of modern institutions mainly to emergence and influence of industrialism. The constant change inhering in modern life results from not capitalism but “a complex division of labour and harnessing production to human needs through the industrial exploitation of nature”. Therefore, for Durkheim, whole modern social structure and its institutions formed by mechanical solidarity are based on high level of differentiation and division of labour, specialization, heterogeneity, low rigidity and intensity, and most importantly moral individualism rather than religion.

As can be seen in this sketch, modernity comes into existence as a result of major transformations in the mode of production, social structure and self-formation. However, it is clear that contemporary social, political, cultural and economic structures are highly distinct from the principles of the aforementioned classical modern world and the crises, in any kind, experienced today cannot be analysed in light of those theoretical perspectives. Herein, there arises the discussion on whether or not we live in a different world order, namely postmodernity completely detached from modernity.

2.1.1. Modernity or Postmodernity?

Although it is possible to identify different periods within modernity itself as early modernity, classical modernity and late modernity, recent social changes have brought about hot debates over the very nature of contemporary social world. These debates mainly revolve around the complex arguments about the nature of modernity and postmodernity. There are mainly two fractions explaining the conditions giving way to the emergence of postmodernity and its relationship to modernity. The first line of thought supports the view that we have not entered a new postmodern era that is completely and structurally different from the modern one. On the contrary, the contemporary period is only a moment in the history of modernity having quite different characteristics than the classical modern period. The transformations at issue are exemplified with the argument that in this period “traditional class politics and faith in progress are being replaced by ‘identity politics’ and ‘new’ social movements such as feminism, gay liberation, ecologism, ethnic revivalism, religious neofundamentalism” (Berg 1996:16). On the other hand, the remaining fraction suggests that although these changes have challenged the discourse and legitimacy of modernity. Moreover, the Enlightenment rationality loses its ground by new

postmodern knowledges claiming that reason functions as an illegitimate power to marginalize and exclude different forms of knowledge acquisition, which do not fit into its categories.

In the middle of such an argument, we can identify two distinct groups of theorists. The first party (i.e. Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens) continues to believe that we live in a society still sharing the characteristics of modernity despite major structural transformations. On the other hand, thinkers like Jean Baudrillard, Jean François Lyotard, and Fredrick Jameson contend that society has undergone quiet dramatic changes and we live in a qualitatively different, postmodern era.

In order to analyse the nature of society today, it is better to define basic principles of postmodernity. Postmodernity cannot only be explained as a historical epoch succeeding modernity since it embodies a completely different world perspective. As Lyotard (1986) states “the grand old narratives of the modern social theory and philosophy have been rendered inoperative, they have lost their credibility”. Although postmodernists do not define their philosophy in a determined and clear-cut way, it is still possible to illustrate its basic principles.

For postmodernists, there is no absolute truth. The concept of truth is a contrived illusion used by the privileged in order to gain power to dominate others. Peace and progress cannot be achieved by conventional modern ways. Therefore, modern authority and the concept of authority in general as a source of rigid beliefs and principles should be opposed. Furthermore, trust on science and rationalization and quest for objectivity should be eliminated. Furthermore, since postmodernists suggest that morality is also relative, they think that each religion should be legitimate. In addition to not attributing any “core” or “center” for any social phenomenon,

postmodernists reject any meaningful continuity in history and search for unity. Moreover, postmodernists deconstruct the notion of a coherent self and replace it with a decentered and fragmented self, which is constantly in flux. In the postmodern thinking, the self is fashioned as a site for “performance” and “play”. As the final principle, postmodernists’ support regarding the equality for all regardless of class, religion, sex, ethnicity etc. reinforces their disbelief in the idea of nationalism and their desire for collective ownership.

Even though, at first glance, these principles seem to be quite emancipatory and subversive in nature, I think both the efforts of postmodernists in actualization of their utterances, and the nature and reality of contemporary world should be the points of discussion in identifying which party-modernists or postmodernists-provides a more comprehensive and appropriate picture of today’s society.

I will follow the theoretical perspectives of modernists such as Robert Bellah, Scott Lash, Richard Sennett, Ulrich Beck and John Urry in examining social, political and cultural landscape of contemporary late-modern society since I believe that we do not live in fragmented, unconnected lives devoid of a meaningful and essential center. Today, people still construct narratives about their identities even though such a process happens in a post-traditional order with post-traditional practices and the crisis of contemporary world lies at the very heart of this new order and emerging ways of expression, behavior and thinking in dealing with the problems. Therefore, I think, in line with the perspective of Anthony Giddens, the current social structure should be seen as a consequence of discontinuities within the modern period rather than a complete rupture. Therefore, through this inquiry, my main point of reference regarding the structure of contemporary world will be Giddens’ theory of late modernity.

2.2. Basic Characteristics of Late Modern Period

Giddens (1990, 1992) uses terms such as “radical”, “high” or “late” modernity to describe contemporary social structure and underlines few basic characteristics of this social order. High modernity is characterized by “widespread scepticism about providential reason, coupled with the recognition that since and technology are double-edged, creating new parameters of risk and danger as well as offering beneficent possibilities for humankind” (Giddens 1991:27). Giddens argues that early modernity included industrialism, use of material power and machinery in manufacture, a commodity production system and wage labour. Early modernity developed and reached its highest moment for pursuing interests of nation-state. However, late modernity differs essentially from the early one due to the type of modernization, which it inheres. In *Reflexive Modernization (1994)*, written with Ulrich Beck and Scott Lash, Giddens further pictures his theory of late modernity. Late modernity is identified with reflexive modernization defined as the increasing capacity of self-conscious individuals and groups to apply knowledge to themselves and their societies critically.

Giddens states that late modernity has been shaped by mainly three developments. First, the influence of *intensifying globalization* alters the whole structure of society since “globalization does not only concern the creation of large-scale systems, but also the transformation of local, and even personal, contexts of social experience. Our day-to-day activities are increasingly influenced by the events happening on the other side of the world” (Giddens 1994:5). In such process, the role of instantaneous global communication shaping and restructuring everyday experiences and the self remain quite vital. Second, as almost a direct consequence of globalization, it is possible to identify the emergence of *post-traditional social order*. “A post-

traditional order is not one in which tradition disappears – far from it. It is one in which tradition changes its status. Traditions have to explain themselves, to become open to interrogation or discourse” (Giddens 1994:5). Although one of the main objectives of the Enlightenment was mostly to eradicate all forms of traditions, it only succeeded to destabilize their origins but traditions remained strong. Earlier forms of traditions have been restructured are formed in the name of nationalism, family, gender etc. which become a form of new traditions. However, in a globalizing, plural, heterogeneous and cosmopolitan society, traditions are challenged by,

A constant reasoning and questioning in a dialogic relationship. As the last feature, the *expansion of social reflexivity* remains as the third basic development transforming contemporary societies. “In a detraditionalizing society individuals must become used to filtering all sorts of information relevant to their life situations and routinely act on the basis of that filtering process.....people demand more autonomy in their lives than ever before” (Giddens 1994:6).

The growth of social reflexivity gives way to some major changes in cultural, political and social spheres. Thus, in the field of politics, we witness a political reconstruction through which nation-states can no longer treat citizens as mere “subjects” since today citizens reveal their political behavior and involvement via different media and forms of expression reinforced by increased social reflexivity. Moreover, in the social sphere, people have been participating in open-ended social organizations to a large extent and due to the demise of final authorities, people have been to “fall back increasingly on their resources to construct a coherent identity for themselves” (Thompson, 1995:207). In late-modernity, self can be regarded as a symbolic project and with the expansion of globalization, detraditionalization and high level of social reflexivity, people try to create and maintain a coherent narrative of the self.

As Thompson states:

It is a project that the individual constructs out of the symbolic materials which are available to him or her, materials which the individual weaves into a coherent account of who he or she is, a narrative of self-identity...To recount to ourselves or others who we are is to retell the narratives-which are continuously modified in the process of retelling-of how we got to where we are and of where we are going from here (Thompson,1995:210).

In line with such a project, people have to make a series of choices not only on their tastes, preferences and lifestyles but also on their life destinations and relationships. Thus, individuals have to be constantly “self-reflexive” about their actions and decisions in order to maintain a consistent narrative of their ‘self’.

2.3.The Network Society

Agreeing on the basic principles of post-traditional or late-modern society pictured in Giddens’ theory, putting much emphasis on the information technology revolution and its radical and transformative effects, and the major transformations taking place towards the end of 20th century, Manuel Castells underlines the rise of a new form of a society as the ‘network society’ and defines the term as “the social structure that results from the interaction between social organization, social change, and a technological paradigm constituted around digital information and communication technologies” (Castells 2004: xvii). Underlying the significance of the information technology revolution, in his book *The Rise of the Network Society* Castells states that “as a historical trend, dominant functions and processes in the information age are increasingly organized around networks. Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture. While the networking form of social organization has existed in other times and spaces, the new information technology paradigm provide the material

basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure” (Castells 1996:467).

With the emergence of network society, we have witnessed radical transformations on the level of community, production, communication, self-formation and politics. Replacing the mass society as a social formation based on large concentrations of people coming together in industrial towns and trading centres, the networks society acquires completely different structural characteristics. With the rise of information and communication technologies, computer-mediated communication and the Internet, mass societies composed of organic communities having direct relationships between individuals mainly on the basis of face-to-face communication in conditions of co-presence has been turned to virtual communities in which associations between people are not tied to particular space, time and other physical conditions.(Van Dijk,1999). Furthermore, besides these substantial changes, Castells touches upon the relation between the net and the self, and new modes of time and space experienced in network society. Both space and time have been transformed under the radical impact of information technology paradigm and they are now reconsidered as space of flows and timeless time (Castells, 1996). As the final point, the network society favours networked forms of social organization compared to the ones previously employed “vertical-hierarchical organizations” (Castell, 2004: 3).

2.4. Changing Nature of Politics and Citizenship in Late-Modern Age

2.4.1. Politics in Late-Modern Age

The political structure of late-modern age has been shaped by great historical and political changes happened in 20th century. The death of socialism and its values and ideals, changes in class structure, proliferation of identity-based politics,

globalization, development of information and communication technologies, changes in conceptions of time and space, encouragement of cultural diversity and emergence of new social movements etc. have required some major renewal of political programme which is more suitable to the characteristics of the late-modern period. Today, although we observe some versions of classical social democratic or leftist thinking, and demands for more democratic political systems, we no longer believe that what Marx wrote “ a spectre is haunting Europe” referring to the spectre of socialism and communism. In contemporary political atmosphere, even the most radical forms of political mobilization do not follow such a utopian motivation. Rather, since politics of late-modern age cannot take class politics as a main point of reference due to major transformations happened in 20th century, the demands of many social movements mainly revolve around the issue of rights to be given to the excluded and betterment in the scope of democratization especially within the context of identity politics. In other words, the core values embodied by left and right political leanings did lose their significance in today’s political structure. Therefore, politics of late-modern age pursues a type of politics, which is beyond left, and right and, by a remarkable reformation, it can be called what Giddens calls a “third way politics”. In this context, ‘third way’ is defined by Giddens (1999:26) as “a framework of thinking and policy-making that seeks to adapt social democracy to a world which has changed fundamentally over the past two or three decades. It is a third way in the sense that it is an attempt to transcend both old-style social democracy and neoliberalism”. Before presenting third way programme and its new political practices, it is necessary to highlight basic principles of its preceding political philosophies corresponding to the left and the right.

2.4.2. The Third Way Political Programme

Giddens, in his book *the Third Way*, provides a quite comprehensive outlook of two conflicting political leanings which, to a larger extent, are incompatible with current social and political environment. He pictures fundamental principles of classical social democracy and neoliberalism in order to unfold their inadequacies in responding the political, social, economical and cultural structure of late-modern period.

<p>Classical Social Democracy (The Old Left)</p>	<p>Thatcherism, or Neoliberalism (The New Right)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pervasive state involvement in social and economic life • State dominates over civil society • Collectivism • Keynesian demand management, plus corporatism • Confined role for markets: the mixed or social economy • Full employment • Strong egalitarianism • Comprehensive welfare state, protecting citizens ‘from cradle to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal government • Autonomous civil society • Market fundamentalism • Moral authoritarianism, plus strong economic individualism • Labour market clears like any other • Acceptance of inequality • Traditional nationalism • Welfare state as safety net • Linear modernization • Low ecological consciousness • Realist theory of international order

grave’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linear modernization • Low ecological consciousness • Internationalism • Belongs to bipolar world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belongs to bipolar world
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Table 1: Fundamental principles of classical social democracy and neoliberalism, (Giddens 1999:7-8)

Especially after the collapse of the East European communism in 1989, many social democratic parties did acknowledge the need for a major renewal in the programme of social democracy and left wing political philosophy that will be more compatible with trajectories of the period. Influenced by the emphasis of neoliberalism, new social democratic formation has more integrated the issues of individual freedom and personal choice into its agenda. As opposed to classical social democracy, new social democratic programme abandoned its strict plan in the field of production. Rather, although their intensity cannot be compared to appeal of specific interest groups, ecological consciousness has been introduced as a kind of social democratic policy. In Kitschelt’s (1994:33) words, social democracy “moved beyond the arena of resource distribution to address the physical and social organization of production and cultural conditions of consumption in advanced capitalist societies”.

In light of these changes in the philosophy of social democracy, since the mid-1980s, many leading European communist parties have converted both their philosophies and policies such that the issues coming into prominence such as ecological concerns, participatory politics and community development have resulted in

corrosion to the conflict between left and right. In other words, the left/right division have failed to capture social reality of late-modern period.

Giddens unfolds the reasons of changes appeared in structures of political support giving way to renewal of social democratic programme. Giddens (1999:20) states that “the class relations that used to underlie voting and political affiliations have shifted dramatically, owing to the steep decline in the blue-collar working class.” Furthermore, he points out the value changes occurring due to mainly generational changes in addition to other influences. With regard to these changes, he utilizes Inglehart’s thesis of value change referring to a shift from ‘scarcity values’ to ‘post-materialist values’. Giddens (1999:21) indicates that “Inglehart shows values of economic achievement and economic growth do fade with increasing prosperity. Self-expression and the desire for meaningful work are replacing the maximizing of economic rewards. These concerns are related to a sceptical attitude towards authority- which can be depoliticizing, but on the whole pushes towards greater democracy and involvement than is currently available in conventional politics”. In such an atmosphere dominated by post-materialist values, politics cannot be the politics of a class bloc. Rather, since citizens do no longer participate in political system according to their place in class structure but their socially and culturally constructed identities, it is possible to claim that the intensity of identity-based politics tend to outweigh class-based politics in late-modern period.

Giddens introduces five dilemmas waiting for social democracy, namely globalization, individualism, the nature of the left and the right, political agency and ecological problems. To begin with, as Giddens (1999:31) states, “globalization is not only, or even primarily, about economic interdependence, but about the transformation of time and space in our lives”. Especially with the communications

revolution and the spread of information technology, today every decision, which a person, an institution, an organization and a government make, is a consequence of globalizing processes and is invested with global effects due to existence of interconnected power relations. The effects of globalization have given way to both the rise of 'new individualism' and new forms of collectivity and solidarity. The concept of 'new individualism' at issue here does not signify indifference, depoliticization and "me" generation. On the contrary, with communication revolution, today many people make themselves heard in the public sphere in line with their specific interests such as ecological problems and human rights. The most significant aspect of new individualism is that values are not depended on tradition. As Beck states (1998), people are called for constituting themselves as individuals who plan, understand, design their selves. Furthermore, new individualism voices the demands for greater democratization.

Regarding the nature of the left/right distinction, today, in line with the new social democratic framework, the distinction at issue here is in the process of re-establishment. Together with socialism and great scope of globalization, we can no longer picture strong oppositional left and right political philosophies. Since the concept of "enemy" disappeared, powerful organization around some fundamental values and principles has also lost significance. Today, the major answer to which all political approaches have tried to respond refers to the question that how capitalism should be governed and regulated in most effective way. The left and right parties have been redefined according to their responses to this particular question. Besides the problems regarding capitalism, late-modern political landscape has been occupied with the issues within the reach of the left/right scheme. These issues refers to ecological problems, changing nature of work, family, personal and cultural

identity which goes beyond values of the classical left such as social justice and emancipation. Therefore, late-modern politics has been governed by both, what Giddens calls, emancipatory politics of the classical left and life politics. In Giddens (1999:44) words, “whereas emancipatory politics concerns life chances, life politics concerns life decisions. It is a politics of choice, identity and mutuality”. Therefore, instead of the left/right division, Giddens offers the idea of ‘active middle’ or the ‘radical centre’ since the fractions of the left and the right are not sufficient to propose radical solutions and radical policies to the problems of life politics.

The renewal in the left/right framework has brought about the question of political agency. In late-modern era, politics regarded as inconclusive and government drained of power has to respond the demands of new social movements. As Giddens (1999:47) states that in contemporary world, government exists to “offer a forum for reconciling the comparing claims of diverse interests, create and open public sphere, in which unconstrained debate about policy issues can be carried on”. By the loss of power of national governments, new social movements can be regarded as new forms of political engagement and mobilization. In line with such a trend, Beck (1992) introduces the concept of ‘sub-politics’ referring to the politics that has migrated away from parliament towards single-issue groups in the society. Sub-politics is formed by active citizen involvement to mostly issues related to identity without seeing government’s policy implementations as an only and final solution to related problems. Herein, citizens find the power to demand, control and negotiate with government’s perspectives and implementations regarding a specific issue. Bearing in mind all these aspects, Giddens (1999:64) indicates that “the overall aim of third way politics should be to help citizens pilot their way through the major revolutions

of our time: globalization, transformations in personal life and our relationship to nature.”

The third way political programme also aims at a significant restructuring of the state and its relations to civil society in order to realizing the process of the deepening and widening of democracy and civic engagement. Collaboration between state and civil society bear a potential for a powerful civic culture. In line with such a reformation, emergence of an open and transparent public sphere as a space for participatory democracy stands as the indispensable principles of the new formation of state. Furthermore, in late-modern age, the concept of nation-state has to be subjected to restructuring due to high potential of fragmentation resulted from different and various identity positions and cultural diversity.

Regarding the issue of nationhood, Giddens (1999:130) proposes a more cosmopolitan version of nationhood since “the borders of current states are becoming frontiers because of their ties to other regions and their involvement with transnational groupings of all kinds”. Within the scope of third way politics, cultural diversity and multiculturalism as two significant social dynamics of contemporary late-modern age are planned to go hand in hand with the national identities. As Miller (1995:420) states, “we must hold on to the principle of nationality, while striving to forge national identities that can accommodate the pluralism and mutability of contemporary culture”. In line with this formulation, what is expected is to build open and inclusive and reflexive construction of national identity.

2.4.3. Radical Politics for Radicalized Modernity

Political radicalism is historically associated with the various fractions of the left political philosophies since it is invested with the demands of major and subversive

structural transformations in various spheres. The most remarkable example of such demands was resulted from socialism. However, today, the hope for socialism and communism has lost its credibility and therefore, political radicalism has been shaped by motivations quite different from ones of the old left and the right in line with the changing dynamics of society. New radicals have turned their eyes to new social movements organized around single-issues due to the fact that people have to define themselves on the basis of mostly socially constructed identities compared to class-based orientations. In line with this transformation, politics and social movements have shaped according to problems of identity rather than class. Thus, as Giddens (1994:3) affirms, “New social movements cannot readily be claimed for socialism. While the aspirations of some such movements stand close to socialist trends, their objectives are disparate and sometimes actively opposed to one another [...] .the new social movements are not ‘totalizing’ in the way socialism is (or was), promising a new ‘stage’ of social development beyond the existing order”.

Radicalized modernity characterized by globalization, post-traditional social order and social reflexivity have altered the role of nation-state, citizenship practices, political participation, political expression and mobilization. In other words, radicalized modernity, with all its institutions, has given way to a complete political reconstruction. In light of such a restructuring in politics, radicalized modernity can only be organized around the radical politics. In this social structure, old political philosophies fall short of responding the needs of society. As Giddens (1994) points out, while socialism and conservatism stands as disintegrated, neoliberalism is paradoxical and liberal democracy remains not quite well equipped to responding the demands of reflexive citizenry of the radicalized modernity.

Radical politics has several objectives to attain a comprehensive political reconstruction appropriate for characteristics of radicalized modernity. The first objective aims at repairing damaged solidarities. In Giddens (1994:13) words, “we should speak more of reordered conditions of individual and collective life, producing forms of social disintegration to be sure, but also offering new bases for generating solidarities”. In other words, the plan is to combine the concepts of new individualism and collectivity in a way that it opens a way for forming a new kind of solidarity different from the old ones. New form of solidarity should result from reconciliation of individual autonomy, reciprocity and interdependence. Moreover, solidarity in a post-traditional social order should follow the principle of active trust and renewal of personal and social responsibility for other reflected through various media.

The following objective refers to rising significance of life politics in addition to emancipatory politics. Throughout the history of the political left, the idea of emancipation has been the main motivation for various social movements. Emancipation means freedom exercised in different fields ranging from freedom from domination to tradition. While emancipatory politics deals with the issues related to life chances, since radicalized modernity is invested other problems mainly related to consumption, social status and identity, the political realm has been extended by integration of life politics as self-actualisation. In a period in which class politics, and accordingly, emancipatory politics have lost its intensity, life politics functions as the dominant mode of political form without breaking ties with its emancipatory ideals. In Giddens’ (1990:156) words, “An “ethics of the personal” is a grounding feature of life politics, just as the more established ideas of justice and equality are of emancipatory politics.”

As another objective, radical politics supports emergence of generative politics appearing in an atmosphere in which state exercises its power only to a limited degree. Therefore, generative politics defined by Giddens (1999) as “a politics which seeks to allow individuals and groups to make things happen, rather than have things happen to them, in the context of overall social concerns and goals” have the potential to transcend hegemony of state power and make life-political decisions taken by reflexive citizenry.

The reflections of radical modernity and radical politics have been revealed through social movements as modes of radical engagements. According to Melucci (1989), social movements provide glimpses of possible futures and are in some part means for their realisation. Social movements mostly regarded as expressions of counter-power and dissatisfaction have taken many forms in radicalized modernity. Giddens (1990) introduces four types of social movements, namely free speech/democratic movements, labour movements, ecological movements and peace movements exercised through modernity. Today, although they share their main objectives with the old ones, new social movements have become more specialized and diverse in line with life politics as self-actualisation, the developments in information and communication technologies and globalization. As Şentürk (2006:41) defines, “new social movements differ from classical ones in terms of their unconnectedness to a political base, lack of a class-based and economical background, heterogeneous organization and education level of their members and their appeal to cultural field as a focus”. The emergence of contemporary modes of radical political expression, participation and mobilization cannot be handled without touching upon new citizenship practices.

2.5. Changing Trends in Citizenship

The information and communication technology revolution, emergence of new media, characteristics of late- modern age such as globalization and high level of self-reflexivity have foregrounded hot debates about the relationship between changing nature of citizenship, its practices and a new form of doing politics. Herein, the issues of democratization, escalating civic participation and involvement have also become quite pertinent to the transformations at issue.

Studies on citizenship mainly reached an agreement on three points. First, modern citizenship is defined as a personal status consisting of a body of universal rights (i.e., legal claims on the state) and duties held equally by all legal members of a nation state (Marshall 1964; Brubaker 1992). Second, most scholars share the view that the legal requirements of an emergent capitalist society were chiefly responsible for the birth of modern citizenship rights (Bendix 1977, Barbalet 1989). Third, most scholars offer that theories on citizenships should be arisen from the complex relationship between the state and the capitalist economy (Ofle 1984, Lindlom 1977).

The conceptualization of citizenship introduced should be exposed to a subversive rethinking in line with the developments and changes emerged in social, political and cultural fields in late-modern times. However, such a rethinking should begin with the classic work of T. H. Marshall (1964), *Citizenship and Social Class*, which remains as a main point of reference in citizenship studies. Marshall's definition of modern citizenship includes formal rights, duties and social entitlements- "the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society" (Marshall 1964:72). With these

characteristics, modern citizenship embraces three kinds of rights, which can be assigned to different periods in history: civil rights such as right to sell one's labour in a free market economy, political rights such as the right to vote and social rights such as the right to social justice through social security, unemployment insurance etc.

Period	Rights	Institutions
17-18 th centuries	Legal rights	Jury system
18-19 th centuries	Political rights	Parliaments
19-20 th centuries	Social rights	Welfare State

Table 2: Marshall's model of citizenship, (Turner 1997:12)

Even though Marshall's theory of citizenship and the related history have been and still is a seminal understanding in the field, it is not devoid of major criticisms leading us to a necessity to a reformulation of citizenship responding the structure of contemporary society. To begin with, many scholars disagree with the Marshall's model especially with its explanation regarding form of citizenship and its practices in 20th century. It is argued that 20th century has witnessed various forms of economic citizenship in the forms of workers' participation, economic democracy or industrial democracy (Turner, 1997). Furthermore, Marshall's model is highly criticized due to its lack of interest in development of cultural rights, linguistic, religious and cultural differentiation (Turner, 1997) and democratisation reflected in the principle of the ontological equality of human beings, individual autonomy and equality of opportunity (Mannheim, 1992). Moreover, as Turner (1997:14) points out, "Marshall took identity for granted, [...] Marshall's theory does not provide any

guidance for understanding citizenship in a multicultural environment, where there are systematic contradictions of identity.”

These criticisms have resulted in formation of an alternative history of citizenship and a new paradigm for contemporary citizenship practices especially revolving around problems of identity. As Turner (1994) indicates, postmodernization of culture and the globalization of politics have rendered the existing citizenship literature insufficient and the development of transnational spheres of governance, instantaneous news and global networks paving the way for new social movements’ alteration the assumed organic relationship between citizenship and the nation state. In Mitchell’s (2003:387) words, “if the western citizen of the nineteenth century was a member of a consolidating nation, the contemporary citizen of the twenty-first century is a member of a deterritorializing state.” Thus, following the recent changing structural trends, Miller (2007:35) states that “the last two hundred years of modernity have produced three zones of citizenship, with partially overlapping but also distinct historicities. These zones of citizenship are: the political (the right to reside and vote), the economic (the right to work and prosper) and the cultural (the right to know and speak). The first category concerns political rights; the second, material interests; and the third, cultural representation (Rawls 1971:61).

2.5.1. Cultural Citizenship

The type, which corresponds to the third zone of citizenship and responds to contemporary social, political and cultural social structure is defined as cultural citizenship. The term is loaded with various conceptions from different academic fields and therefore defined accordingly. In other words, the idea of cultural citizenship is adrift referring multiculturalism and identity politics for some,

consumerism and taste formations for others; some scholars think that the term remains analytically bound to the national context, and for others it can only be understood in terms of transnational flows (Delanty, 2002). To illustrate a general picture, it is possible to identify two main approaches regarding scope and objectives of cultural citizenship.

As an example of the first approach, Stevenson (1997a: 42) states that “cultural citizenship can be said to have been fulfilled to the extent to which society makes commonly available the semiotics and material cultures necessary in order to make social life meaningful, critique practices of domination, and allow for the recognition of difference under conditions of tolerance and mutual respect”. Within this scope, public issues remaining outside of mainstream political parties’ exclusionary and marginalizing practices and objectives constitutes the core subjects of cultural citizenship. Adding a cultural dimension to citizenship therefore points towards the deepening and broadening of questions related to politicization of everyday life” (Stevenson 2001:5). Therefore, cultural citizenship necessitates the existence in, participation and interference to the public sphere in various levels. Furthermore, Rosaldo (1994) defines the concept as the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, language) from the norms of the dominant national community, without endangering the right to belong in the sense of participating in the nation state’s democratic process. With such a conception, Rosaldo notes that cultural citizenship aims at defending and expanding rights of communities such as ethnic groups, activist groups with practices and tactics within the extent of micropolitics. Moreover, Uricchio (2004) points out that within the scope of practices in P2P (peer-to-peer) collaborative communities formed in the Internet in various forms, cultural citizenship have gained the potential to run head to head with the established forms

of political citizenship. Underlying the significance of new information and communication technologies, high level of media convergence, changing trends in community formation and culture, Uricchio highlights subversive and from below form of doing politics experienced by cultural citizens. Stressing the reconfigured structure of cultural citizenship, he states that “Community, freed from any necessary relationship to the nation-state, and participation, in the sense of active, then, are two prerequisites for the enactment of cultural citizenship” (2004:148).

While the perspectives regarding cultural citizenship mainly constituted around field of identity politics and extending of rights and freedoms of excluded, marginalized or sub-altern groups, there exists a stream of thought suggesting that cultural citizenship also deals with the issues of everyday life, leisure, critical consumption and popular culture. Following this line of thought and as an example of the second approach, McGuigan (2005) argues that the most general understanding of citizen engagement has offered an agenda, which excludes the issues of everyday life, affect and pleasure from scope of political discussion. Challenging the dominant definitions of citizenship and emphasizing the notion of cultural public sphere, McGuigan (2005: 435) indicates:

In the late-modern world, the cultural public sphere is not confined to a republic of letters-the eighteenth century’s literary public sphere- and ‘serious’ art, classical, modern or, for that matter, postmodern. [.....] The concept of a cultural public sphere refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain of affective- aesthetic and emotional- modes of communication. [.....] The cultural public sphere provides vehicles for thought and feeling, for imagination and disputations argument, which are not necessarily of inherent merit but may be of consequences.

Similar to McGuigan and rather than being concerned with the concerns of identity politics, Hermes (2005: 4) deals with how “cultural citizenship as a term can also be used in relation to less formal everyday practices of identity construction,

representation, and ideology, and implicit moral obligations and rights”. This form of citizenship can accord with the objective of Ötekilerin Postası aiming at voicing counter-hegemonic discourses and identity claims voiced by otherised, excluded and marginalized groups in Turkey.

2.5.2. Radical Democratic Citizenship

Radical democratic citizenship emerges as a consequence of radical democracy project and radical politics as an alternative to political left. New social democracy and third way political programme have brought the necessity of a renewal in practices and perspectives regarding citizenship. The ideal of radical and plural democracy, which will be analysed in detail in following sections, can only be accomplished through a revival of radical and democratic citizenship practices. Mouffe (1992:4) defines a radical, democratic citizen “as an active citizen, somebody who acts as a citizen, who conceives of herself as a participant in a collective undertaking”. In such a project, radical democracy follows the principles of political liberalism and plurality and diversity of interest and demands, and greater liberty and equality. Following this trend, as Mouffe (1992:4) proposes, radical citizenship should “reassert the view of citizenship as a system of rights constitutionally guaranteed to all members of a political community, and to affirm that these rights should not only be political but also social. In this way one can re-establish the link between social and political citizenship, which was the great contribution of social democracy and which neo-liberalism has attempted to break”. Further, radical citizenship does not adopt an essentialist understanding of political identity determined by a specific concern. In this respect, as Mouffe (1993:6) notes, “a radical democratic citizenship could provide a form of identification that enables the establishment of a common political identity among diverse democratic struggles.”

2.5.3. Dutiful vs. Actualizing Citizenship

There mainly appear two perspectives regarding the role of communication in political participation especially aiming at younger citizens in the digital age. On the one hand, following Putnam's (2000) argument that, people are exposed to a passive television culture and they are unwilling to be a member of a larger political organization and movement leading to a 'generational displacement'. On the other hand, younger citizens as regarded as "digital natives" actively taking part in participatory media and they foster and contribute to the formation of new forms of engagement (Jenkins, 2006). These conflicting narratives are integrated to the understanding of Bennett et al. (2011:836) and they affirm that "both are partly right in the sense that each describes different parts of a changing citizenship picture: The former accounting for the fragmentation of an old civic order, and the latter bringing emerging civic styles into focus".

The large part of youth are online almost in every minute of a day during they are awake and younger citizens are more likely to follow political media content whether it is alternative or not through social network sites. With the widespread use of smart phones such as Blackberry and I-phone, 3G technology and their interest, curiosity and desire to keep up with the latest technology, younger citizens tend to use social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter for information, political expression and mobilization organized in the offline domain. Moreover, we can say that young citizens who actively seek out information online generally report higher levels of offline civic engagement (Pasek et al. 2006, Xenos & Bennett2007).

In the light of these conditions, Bennett (2011) introduces two forms of citizenship and civic skills namely, dutiful citizenship (DC) and actualizing citizenship (AC).

For Bennett (2011:838), “The core characteristics of the DC style is that individuals participate in civic life through organized groups, from civic clubs to political parties, while becoming informed via news, and generally engaging in public life out of a sense of personal duty”. According to the perspective supported by Putnam, new types of civic engagement have a tendency to disappear and they are replaced with new civic orientations and rise of another style of citizenship called actualizing citizenship especially in younger citizens. As Bennett (1998) states, actualizing citizenship includes some civic trends resulted from the rise of more personally expressive cause-oriented politics including lifestyle concerns leading to protests for various problems and struggles.

	Civil Style	Communication Logic
Dutiful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oriented around citizen input to government or formal public organizations, institutions, and campaigns • Rooted in responsibility and duty • Channeled through membership in social groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily one-way consumption of managed civic information (news and political ads) • When individual content production occurs, it is aimed at specific institutional targets (contacting elected officials, letters to newspapers)
Actualizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to many forms of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lines between content

	<p>creative civil input, ranging from government to consumer politics to global activism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooted in self actualization through social expression • Personal interests channeled through loosely tied networks 	<p>consumption and production blurred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual content production and sharing over peer networks that tie personal identity to engagement (which can occur in traditional political contexts such as viral video sharing in political campaigns)
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Table 3: Dutiful and Actualizing Styles of Civic Action and Communication, Bennett (2011: 840)

The table above, Bennett illustrates the ideal types regarding the citizen skills corresponding to the two forms of citizenship. It is evident that citizen skills required for actualizing citizenship is quite compatible with both the structure and practices of late-modern politics and self-formation; and characteristics of new media.

CHAPTER 3

NEW MEDIA AND POLITICS

3.1. Definitions of New Media

The term new media refers to different type of media in different historical periods carrying various social, political and cultural consequences. For instance, although today these forms remain at the center of what we call “old media”, Habermas (1993) classifies radio, motion picture and television as “new media”. Such an ambiguity resulting from the category of “new” is also experienced today due to sheer pace in the evolution of new media.

The speed at issue here is such a phenomenon that in a five-year period, a well-known and quite popular medium of communication can be regarded as old-fashioned and dysfunctional since it can be replaced with the one is more appealing to the users with its advanced features. In line with this evolution, the hardware upon which new media live has tried to be compatible with the latest developments. For instance, iPhone as a breakthrough technology connecting the user the Web and the new media in seconds is introduced in 2007; and very soon Blackberrys and Android phones and as a quite different new media device the iPad has followed the iPhone in

2010. These devices have been designed in line with the characteristics of new media, which are more suitable for business purposes, accessing the Internet, reading news, viewing images, and movies, artistic and creative activities and participating in social media.

In order to illustrate the scope of new media arose in the mid-1990s, Manovich (2002) argues that new media is a highly broad term including the Internet, Web sites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs, works having 3-D animation and digital composing. He further states that although the printing press in the fourteenth century and photography in the nineteenth century had revolutionary consequences for modern society and culture, new media revolution differs from since it bears “the shift of all culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication” (Manovich 2002:19). Underlying its remarkable difference from the previous forms in terms of its scope of influence, Manovich (2002:19) states that “the computer mediated revolution affects all stages of communication, including acquisition, manipulation, storage, and distribution; it also affects all types of media-texts, still images, moving images, sound and spatial constructions”. Further, he lists the basic principles of new media as numerical representation, modularity, automation and variability. New media as being easy to customize, manipulate, dense and interactive generates various consequences, which goes beyond the innovative nature of such technology. The structural changes stemming from new media have also reflected on social, political and cultural reformation in late-modern society and they have brought considerable transformation in each field and reconstruction of their inner relations.

Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002:7) further defines new media as information and communication technologies and their related social contexts including “the artifacts

or devices that enable and extend our abilities to communicate; communication activities or practices we engage in to develop and use these devices; and the social arrangements or organizations that form around the devices and practices.

Other than these approaches, Lister et al. (2009:12-13) propose six definitions of new media. With regard to new media, they underline new textual experience; new ways of representing the world, new relationships between subjects and media technologies; new relationship between embodiment, identity and community; new conceptions of the biological body's relationship to the technological media and new patterns of organization and production. As the most popular form of computer-mediated communication, social media and social network sites stand at the center of debates on new media.

3.2. Social Media and Social Network Sites

Since the beginning of the 21st century, new media has introduced a new platform in virtual space having much more “social” characters than ever. With the existence of various social network sites established around different interests such as Napster which was highly popular free MP3 music file-sharing at the time and Myspace as a social medium providing publicity for underground and alternative music groups, social media has now become an inevitable and integral part for both in diverse aspects of communication practices and social, political, cultural and also economical reformation. Although its definition reveals some variety, social media has been especially defined by its potential and openness with regard to content production and distribution. Toni et al. (2011) regards social media as the means of interactions among people through which they produce, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Further, Kaplan and

Haenlein (2010:61) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”.

The emergence “social media” as a subversive concept in communication structure might be readily associated with what Castells (2007) calls the rise of “mass self-communication” in network society appeared in late-modern age. He asserts that:

The diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, and a variety of tools of social software prompted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect local and global in a chosen time. The communication system of the industrial society was centered around the mass media, characterized by the mass distribution of a one-way message from one to many. The communication foundation of the network society is the global web of horizontal communication networks that include the multimodal exchange of interactive messages from many to many both synchronous and asynchronous (Castells 2007: 246).

Therefore, by adapting to new forms of communication, people have formed their own system of mass communication via SMS, blogs, podcasts and the like. The picture illustrated here has reached such a level that even mainstream media use blogs and collaborative interactive news networks in order to distribute of the content and interact with the audience.

Today, there are many types of social media giving services in the field of communication, collaboration/authority building, multimedia, reviews and opinions, entertainment and brand monitoring. With the emergence of social media and social network sites, today we reflexively construct our identities, form various communities differing in interests, concerns and objectives, share political views, organize some events either for entertainment, vacation etc. or for political meetings, demonstrations for rights and freedoms of the excluded and marginalized and use these sites as a space for publicity and commercial purposes. For instance, the US

election in 2008, the Tea Party demonstrations across America in 2010, the Arab Spring in 2010 and the Occupy Wall Street Movement in 2011 utilized the tools of social networks sites for organization, action, participation and information. In these kinds of movements, special characteristics of the sites such as existence of applications for mobile connectivity, blogging and photo/video sharing have crucial role both for distribution and plurality of information received from plural channels other than mainstream media.

Boyd and Ellison (2007:2) defines social network sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. They share the view that these sites are the space through which users can make visible their social networks formed in offline world. In other words, this perspective does not regard social network sites unique since they allow its users to meet with strangers. They indicate that practice of “networking” is not a decisive feature of social network sites.

Underlying its inconceivable pace, Levinson (2013) prefers to use to “new new media” rather than social media since he indicates that social aspect of “new new media” is not so revolutionary compared to its older forms which he calls new media referring the examples of The New York Times website, Amazon and iTunes which are still controlled by market relations and “gatekeepers”. Levinson states that newness of “new new media” lies in the fact that “in contrast, the most recent, current media of the 21st century allow consumers to just as easily produce and disseminate as receive and consume information” (2013:2). Today, “new new media” carries the potential of direct democracy compared to “old media” used by

representative democracies for forming and strengthening hegemonic, standardized and exclusionary discourses. The change at issue “pertains not only to politics, but also to how we live our daily lives in the real offline world, where the restaurants in which we are dining can be known by everyone with whom we socialize-who “follows” us in some way on Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare- instantly and wherever we and they may be” (Levinson 2013:2). Levinson lists the guiding principles of “new new media” in such a way that in “new new media” every consumer is a producer and one get what one does not pay for meaning that various social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter are free to its reader/writer users. Moreover, “new new media” has both competitive and supporting nature with regard to its constituents and older media. “New new media” remains more than search engines and e-mail. As a final characteristic, although it is highly an open platform for producing and distribution of information, “new new media” ultimately beyond the user’s control.

Although varying according to concept of the site, each site such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter and LinkedIn include a profile page composed of personal information such as age, location and interests and a profile photo. Other than profiles, many sites provide public display of connection, which a user has, and they also contain some features such as instant messaging, private messaging, commenting, sharing, liking, photo/video sharing which increase speed of communication and introduce new practices of communication. These new practices of computer-mediated communication based on networked social organization have brought about discussions regarding the emergence of a new public sphere and civil society, online civic environments and expressive styles of actualizing citizenship,

emergence of “networked publics”, expressive political participation, structure of virtual communities, nature of virtual politics, the issue of democracy.

3.3. Media Convergence

With regard to nature of contemporary media landscape, Jenkins states that “we are living in an age when changes in communications, storytelling and information technologies are reshaping almost every aspect of contemporary life -- including how we create, consume, learn, and interact with other. A whole range of new technologies enable consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content and in the process, these technologies have altered the ways that consumers interact with core institutions of government, education and commerce”. Jenkins (2006:3) defines convergence as ‘flow of content across multiple media platforms’ meaning that media audiences nowadays have a quite crucial place in creating and distributing content, and therefore convergence has to be examined in terms of social, as well as technological changes within the society. According to Jenkins, media convergence is a continuous process that should not be viewed as a displacement of the old media with the new, but rather as interaction between different media forms and platforms (Jenkins, 2006). The concept of “convergence” signifies a multitude of meanings such as convergence of media ownership and production, the convergence of texts appearing in different media forms and the convergence of media audiences.

While the participatory and social element of media that we experience today is based on the principles of de-hierarchization and fragmentation, the more conventional media sectors have moved toward ever-greater convergence and concentration. Thus, we witness a two-directional orientation especially regarding

the convergence of media ownership and production. For instance, as Uricchio (2004:141) indicates “Bertelsmann, Sony-Columbia, Time-Warner-CNN-AOL, Disney-ABC, and until recently Vivendi Universal, have all steadily concentrated their media holdings, dominating the world of content providers to an extent never before seen in human history”. The most significant point to be highlighted in this picture refers to the situation that today there exists a conflicting trend in formation of social organization. On the one hand, pointed out by Uricchio (2004), there is the ever-more centralized and hierarchized state of media ownership and on the other hand, the rapid spread of internet-based participatory network media applications, which are by definition de-centralized and de-hierarchized. Besides these trends, we also observe a great tendency of the convergence of media audience, namely opportunity given to audiences to access media content across different media forms.

3.4. The Internet, New Media and Their Political Implications

The political implications of the Internet and new media cannot be discussed without referring to the structure of political elements in modern period such as public space.

3.4.1. Models of Public Spaces in Modern Period

As an interdisciplinary concept, the term public sphere, “kamusal alan” in Turkish, has been employed in various disciplines having different connotations. Even though each discipline defines the concept according to its own principles and objectives, the most well-known historical analysis of public sphere is presented by Jürgen Habermas in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). After its translation to English in 1989, Habermas’s theory of public sphere has become the point of reference in the discussions regarding the issue. In Fraser’s

words, “Habermas’s concept of the public sphere provides a way of circumventing some confusions that have plagued progressive social movements and the political theories associated with them” (1992:109). Although the book pictures the historical transformation of public sphere from eighteenth century to late twentieth century, and it receives harsh criticisms due to its highly structural, differential and theoretically inclusive but practically exclusionary nature, it still functions as a quite effective tool to provide a comprehensive analysis of changing inner dynamics of both actors of public sphere and public sphere as a medium for expression and exchange of ideas in late-modern (post-traditional) society.

The existing plurality of different conceptions of public spheres stems from the inner richness and significance of the concept for explaining the dynamics of contemporary late modern, post-traditional society. One of such interpretation is offered by Myra Marx Ferre and her colleagues in 2002 by delineating four models of public sphere namely, the representative liberal, participatory liberal, discursive and constructionist models. According to Ferree et al. (2002), the principle of representative liberal theory favours the premise that citizenry should be the sole power holder and agent of authority. “The public sphere, according to representative liberalism, should reflect the public’s representatives. The larger and more representative the party or organization, the more voice it has earned in the media, and the more powerful it should be in shaping decisions” (2002: 291). Furthermore, the participatory liberal theory aims at maximizing the participation of citizens. “Participation enhances the public sphere, allowing for the emergence of something approximating a general will” (2002:295). Quite distinct from these two models, the discursive model follows the Habermasian framework offering that discussions should include other segments of society besides central political figures while

deciding on normative issues. Moreover, similar to participatory liberal theory, discursive tradition underlines the importance of the idea of popular inclusion with an emphasis on deliberation. Discursive theory assumes that “the participants are part of the same moral community, sharing basic values” (2002: 303) and it regards mutual respect and dialogue as significant constitutive elements. As the last model, the constructionist model follows the line of thinking of Michel Foucault especially on the question of who should participate and when to public sphere. This model supports the view that “Public discourse should question the boundaries of ‘the political’ by a strong norm of popular inclusion, which in turn serves the goals of empowerment of the marginalized and recognition of differences” (2002:315).

As an alternative perspective, Seyla Benhabib (1992) proposed a different three models of public space corresponding to three main perspectives in Western political thought. The first model, defined as the “agonistic view” which is mainly based on “republican virtue” and “civic virtue” tradition generally associated with thought of Hannah Arendt. Arendt’s concept of public space can be examined as both an “agonistic space” experienced in Ancient Greek polis and “associational space” which is a dominant modern medium for doing politics. Furthermore, the second model, named as “legalistic” model of public space, following the liberal tradition deals with “just and stable order” discussed in light of Bruce Ackerman’s understanding of “public dialogue”. As the final model, “discursive public space”, introduced by Jürgen Habermas remains as the most popular, influential and mainstream understanding regarding both the emergence and structure of public space in history. Acknowledging the importance and contribution of these three models to conception of public space, Habermasian model remains as more pertinent to structure of late-modern social and political system. Since characteristics of late

modern society have given way to the legitimacy crisis of modern nation-state and its basic institutions, and Habermasian model provides comparatively and potentially more rich and extensive understanding regarding the transformation of politics and public space through which we can better examine contemporary forms of doing politics.

3.4.1.1. Discursive Understanding of Public Space

Habermas in his seminal book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, gives a structural, historical account of regarding the emergence and transformation of public sphere from a bourgeois society to welfare society. In his analysis, with the influence of Frankfurt School, he pictures the change of public from a “culture-debating” to a “culture-consuming” one. The bourgeois public sphere was a space for a free and unconstrained dialogue between rational private individuals who offer powerful arguments, regardless of their material wealth and status, for attaining a collective, disinterested good.

In his book, Habermas supports modernity despite its highly stressed negative connotations such as individuation and fragmentation. With the emergence of multiple public spheres of political reasoning, social differentiation and significant structural changes, modernity alters the quality and characteristics of political participation. Changes happened in three realms- society, self, culture- have also reflected to the nature of participation. While, in Habermas’ critical framework, political participation refers to democratization of decision-making process, participation is viewed with a more inclusionary perspective, which does not only confine to political realm but also can be realized in social and cultural spheres.

In line with a modernist understanding of participation, Habermas states that:

Public space is not understood *agonistically* as a space of competition for acclaim and immortality among a political elite; it is viewed democratically as the creation of procedures whereby those affected by general social norms and political decision can have a say in their formulation, stipulation, and adoption. This conception of the public is also different than the liberal one, for although Habermas and liberal thinkers believe that legitimation in a democratic society can result only from a public dialogue, in the Habermasian model this dialogue does not stand under the constraint of neutrality but is judged according to the criteria, represented by the model of a “practical discourse”.

Habermas defines the bourgeois public sphere as something which “may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of their reason”.

Depending on the principle of equality of all citizens, public sphere is formed by active participation of individuals as autonomous agents. “The bourgeois public sphere institutionalized, according to Habermas, not just a set of interests and opposition between state and society but as a practice of rational-critical discourse on political matters” (Calhoun 1992:9). Having these characteristics, the bourgeois public sphere existed a space resulted from the rise of national states having the early capitalist commercial economy. Therefore, separation of private realm from the public remained necessary in order to pursue a critical debate and reasoning about the general interests distinct from the field of state power.

Private Realm	Public Sphere	Sphere of Public Authority
<p>Civil Society (realm of commodity exchange and social labour)</p> <p>Conjugal family's internal space (bourgeois intellectuals)</p>	<p>Public sphere in the political realm</p> <p>Public sphere in the world of letters (clubs, press) (market of culture product)</p> <p>“Town”</p>	<p>State (realm of the “police”)</p> <p>Court (Courtly-noble society)</p>

Table 4: Basic characteristics of the public sphere, Habermas (1993:30)

As illustrated in the Table 4, while civil society is a space outside the sphere of public authority, public sphere, standing between private and public realm, is social and political space through which society can interfere the nature of governance by participation. Habermas (1996:367) defines civil society as “more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations, and the movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres, distill and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere.” Since according to Habermas’ formulation, public sphere is grounded on commonalities on concerns, interests and common humanity and citizens use universal reason as the basis of political

engagement, civil society is regarded as the space for pure difference due to its inclusion of different identity positions. The fact that private realm is identified with particularity and difference paves the way for a peculiar conception of civil society as a space incompatible with consensus and rational debate.

According to Habermas, the foundations of the public sphere have been subjected to a subversive transformation through a “refeudalization” of society. As Calhoun (1990:21) states:

Structural transformation came about, however, as private organizations began increasingly to assume public power on the one hand, while the state penetrated the private realm on the other. State and society, once distinct, became interlocked. The public sphere was necessarily transformed as the distinction between public, private realms blurred, the equation between the intimate sphere, and private life broke down with a polarization of family and economic society, rational-critical debate gave way to the consumption of culture.

In such a society governed by culture-consuming mentality, the form of political involvement and the mission of mass media have also been challenged and finally radically altered. The main tendency to replace the shared, critical activity of public discourse by a more passive culture consumption on the one hand and an apolitical sociability on the other (Habermas 1993:160). As in 1960s, politics was dominated by political parties and as state and society are, to larger extent, intertwined, the material conditions for the conventional bourgeois public sphere disappeared and it is replaced with a new version of representative publicity. Publicity is generally regarded as a site for the formation and manipulation of public opinion which, under these circumstances, “takes on a different meaning depending on whether it is brought into play as a critical authority in connection with the normative mandate that the exercise of political and social power be subject to publicity or as the object to be molded in connection with a staged display of, and manipulative propagation

of, publicity in the service of persons and institutions, consumer goods and programs” (Habermas 1993: 236).

The public sphere is composed of all parties constrained by social and political norms of action in a practical discourse. In such a space, we can identify multiple public spheres coming into existence according to their interpretations of those norms. The idea of democracy and high number of diverse public spheres are two sides of the same coin in the discussion of democratization of contemporary late-modern societies.

In his later writings, Habermas gives much emphasis on his moral theory of communicative or discourse ethics rather than “discourse model”. In his discourse model of ethics, by dealing with norms as opposed to values, justice as opposed to good life, and public as opposed to private, he inherits various distinctions from the liberal thought.

Habermas defines a normative dialogue as a conversation followed under the rules of “ideal speech situation”. In ideal speech situation “each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication, each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, and explanations; all must have equal chances to express their wishes, desires, and feelings; and finally, within dialogue, speakers must be free to thematize those power relations that in ordinary contexts would constrain the wholly free articulation of opinions and positions” (Benhabib 1992: 89). This situation is based on an egalitarian relationship. Habermas states that public sphere is the realm of communicative action, which is the major integrating force in modern and late-modern societies. The discourse model including communicative action and ideal speech situation as a fundamental form of

egalitarian, reciprocal relationship between the participants of public sphere holds the power of democratization of democracy.

Although Habermas presents, maybe, the most influential and illustrative picture of modern and late-modern social structures and their effects on the transformation of structure of public sphere, political participation and understanding of citizenship, his analysis has been the object of profound criticisms from different lines of thinking. One of these criticisms comes from Calhoun (1992) regarding the absence and neglect of phenomena like nationalism, feminism, gay and ethnic issues, youth consciousness, social movements, religion in the Habermasian public sphere. Since Habermas treats various identities within private realm, he does not designate any space for their discussion in the scope of public sphere. Furthermore, since Habermas mainly pictures the structural transformation of bourgeois public sphere, he ignores the existence of counter-publics, which does not share the “common good” and “common interest” with the rest. Fraser (1992:123) indicates that,

History records that members of subordinated social groups-women, workers, people of color, and gays and lesbians- have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. I propose to call these subaltern counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.

Moreover, as Eley (1992) states, from the start, the bourgeois public sphere hosted many counterpublics including nationalist, peasant and working class publics and therefore, as opposed to Habermasian trajectory based on complete consensus, the public sphere was always constituted by conflict. As another point, the gendered nature of public sphere has also subjected to major criticisms. Finally closely related to the main concern of this study, Papacharissi (2009b) states that in the age of the Internet, we have new ways of engaging civic participation and democracy, but they

might not align completely with what is expected of a public sphere. Although today the type of engagement is self-referential, but the engagement can still be for the public good (2009b).

Despite all the existing criticisms, the discursive model is still the only model standing as the closest to social, political, cultural and economic structure of contemporary late-modern, post-traditional society with its aspirations like new social movements and identity politics compared to Arendt's agonistic model which is at odds with social conditions of modernity and the liberal model following the principle of dialogic neutrality in public dialogue and associating politics with the juridical relations.

3.5. Democracy and Public Sphere in Online Environments

Despite the fact that there have been great scholarly discussions on the level, intensity and direction of the Internet use for political purposes and its reflections on other political elements such as democracy and public sphere, there has been an agreement about its substantial influence in related fields. Among various positions followed, two main opposing lines of thought dominating the discussions. On the one hand, as Bentivegna states (2002:51) with an outgrowth of incredible expansion of information supply available to citizens, it is possible to reach the desired revitalization of politics. This situation "augments not only the information available but also the opportunities for citizens who have lacked space in traditional media, to express themselves. This underscores the opportunity to invent new forms of community, albeit, virtual, within a public sphere where citizens can debate politically significant subjects." Moreover, Kapor (1993:53) asserts that "Life in cyberspace seems to be shaping up exactly like Thomas Jefferson would have

wanted: founded on the primacy of individual liberty and a commitment to pluralism, diversity, and community.” However, on the other hand, the negative interpretation of the relationship between the Internet and politics revolves around the risk carries the potential for misinformation and overinformation circulation (Dijk, 1999) in cyberspace giving way to passivity and manipulation of political opinions of its users.

Political implications of the use of new media and the Internet cannot be examined without revealing their transformative effects on citizenship, democracy and formation of a new conception of public sphere. In Bentivegna’s words (2002: 52-53);

The new communication technologies offer additional opportunities in so far as they allow the range of supply to expand, on the one hand, and activate occasions for discussion among citizens, on the other. The expansion of supply and of the opportunities for citizens to speak out is the key to the enthusiasm with which the new, modern version of the public sphere launched by the Internet has been greeted [...] Equality among members, the reference to personal experience and the relationship with the media, therefore, three distinctive elements of the technological version of the public sphere offered by the Internet.

Apart from the influence of the new communication technologies on emergence of a technological version of the public sphere, the Internet and its potential for democracy has been a quite controversial topic of discussion. While it can be claimed by many scholars that the Internet and possibilities of new media foster high level of democratic practices in terms of participation and involvement, citizens still have some problems in experiencing that level of democracy due to various obstacles such as access, competence keeping them from enjoying at least a kind of participatory democracy taking place in the Internet. The ambiguous and extraordinary nature of the democracy on the Internet described by Bentivegna as “a

democracy with no reference to a centre, no longer equivalent to the form of the nation-state and no longer equivalent to the global form of decision-making”.

3.6. The Role of Mass Self-Communication in Expression of Counter-power and New Forms of Political Mobilization

Aforementioned transformations taking place in the sphere of communication has radically altered the nature of community and politics and all these has been highly reflected to very structure of forms of political practices and modes of political involvement. As Castells (2007) points out, media have turned into a social space where power remains in a concentrated form than ever and with the development of interactive, horizontal networks of communication, which integrates a user to a process including production, distribution and consumption of meaning, we have witnessed the rise of a new form of communication, mass self-communication. In such an environment, new social movements have become much easier to participate by a more non-essentialist, heterogenous, anonymous kind of community following practices of insurgent politics. Herein, the power of one-directional mass media as a supplementary element of formal politics has been greatly distressed by mass self-communication and its consequences as insurgent politics and new forms of social movements. Throughout this process, the most critical point to be addressed is that the relationship between power and counter-power, and forms of politics experienced in public sphere cannot be handled separately without considering media structure. Media functions as the arena where conflicts over power emerge. Therefore, as Castells (2007:238) observes, there has been “a historical shift of the public sphere from the institutional realm to the new communication space” where different political practices of participation and involvement might come into being due to potentials of the new media space.

Castells defines today's conventional formal politics as media politics which is based on certain rules attached to different forms of images of political leaders which are highly constituted by mass media. Further, he states that media politics is followed by a personality politics leading to scandal politics giving way to distrust and disbelief to both the formal political system and such ideas as democracy. Therefore, power exercised by formal political system through media politics has been challenged by practices of counter-power resulting from mass self-communication. The emergence of processes of counter-power linked to new social movements and insurgent political practices such as Gezi Park protests has been resulted from great subversive consequences of mass self-communication.

Mass self-communication defined as “self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many that communicate with many” by Castells (2007: 248) refers to a new communication space invested with new communication media. In such a realm, it is possible to observe limitless diversity and plurality of channels in production, distribution and consumption of the content especially through social network sites in order to challenge the power constructed by formal political system. The revolutionary aspect of new media or mass self-communication has reflected on people's more direct participation to politics and resistance to existing hegemonic power relations constructed by state as central authority. Today, communication flows at issue, which shape and continuously restructure the public mind have given way to exercise counter-hegemonic practices.

Counter-power described by Castells as “the capacity by social actors to challenge and eventually change the power relations institutionalized in society” (2007:248). As a historical fact, even in most authoritarian ones, counter-power exists in several different forms with changing intensity. Whether it is based on politics, culture or

economy, domination is always responded with resistance. In parallel with increasing questioning of political legitimacy, declining power of nation-state, globalization, rapid and continuous advancement of information and communication technologies, detraditionalization and self-reflexivity, citizens of the 21st century organize quite well-structured social movements based on a wide range of interests such as rights of women, children, ethnic and religious minorities. However, confining the scope of these movements only to problems of identity will be a huge misrepresentation of nature of political mobilization.

As discussed above by Giddens, emancipatory politics meaning politics of inequality has still occupied quite significant place within the range of politics of today. In other words, contemporary politics does not completely discard its motivation regarding labour movement and global capitalism. For instance, “Occupy Wall Street” demonstrations as a movement began in 2011 in New York demanding social and economic inequality and corruption resulting mainly from the finance sector. Their slogan was “We’re the 99%” referring to the social inequality in U.S.A that there is a huge income gap between 99% of the American citizens and the 1% of the wealthiest. However, although their main aim was to restore social and income equality between the two parties, today the movement has expanded its demands and incorporated its objectives more towards the line of identity politics in global scale. The movement has kept alive by the well-designed website. Their slogans that “OccupyWallStreet- The revolution continues worldwide!” and “The only solution is world revolution” illustrate their intensity of radical engagement and determination. They define the movement as “Occupy Wall Street is a leaderless resistance movement with people of many colors, genders, and political persuasions. The one thing we all have in common is that We Are The 99% that will no longer tolerate the

greed and corruption of the 1%. We are using the revolutionary Arab Spring tactic to achieve our ends and encourage the use of nonviolence to maximize the safety to all participants.” The website gives place to many live streams from many countries from all over the world such as Switzerland, the Great Britain, the Netherlands, France and Germany reflecting demonstrations, actions and concerts organized by citizens. Both the content of these videos and structure of the website are almost completely composed of citizens participating to the movement. Forums and instant messaging that the website provides for its users also strengthen both political interaction and mobilization. Moreover, the website functions as a news bulletin board, which lists actions, and assemblies that did and will take place related to the movement.

By considering all these, in 21st century, counter-power in the form of insurgent politics does not only concentrate on identity politics, but also put into action in emancipatory politics. Herein, as Castells (2007:249) points out “the emergence of mass self-communication offers an extraordinary medium for social movements and rebellious individuals to build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms and around their own products”. As experienced before in aforementioned social movements, today without using the means and ways of mass self-communication, any social movement or a form of insurgent politics cannot come into being. Since mass-self communication opens a way for autonomous communication networks challenging the concentrated power of government or business-led media and, by the help of mobile phones with the Internet and various applications, it undermines monopoly of mainstream media in producing and distributing the media content. Therefore, political mobilizations in any kind as a reflection of counter-power cannot be thought without existence of means and ways of mass self-communication.

CHAPTER 4

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

4.1. Alternative Media for Alternative Democracies

The aforementioned high level of media convergence and emergence of a notion of participatory culture introduced since the mid-1990s and experienced by quite different social groups in late-modern or “post-modern” world order have brought about significant challenges to centralized and hierarchized mainstream media as an hegemonic communication channel. On the one hand, we witness such a period in which the mainstream media has become vertically and diagonally monopolized than ever despite the trends of globalization and advancement of information and computer technologies, and on the other hand, we live in an “alternative media” environment taking different names such as “non-mainstream media”, “independent media”, “radical alternative media”, “community media” and “citizen media”. Although there exist a wide range of fractions within the scope of alternative media depending on their main field of interests, all these alternative modes of media aim to make visible what has been destined to be invisible especially during the process of nation-state building in Turkey. As Alankuş states (2009:2) “in the current global media environment, the voice of the hegemonic majorities are heard more than the

voice of have-nots and the voice of those who are discriminated against because of their ethnic, religious, sexual, cultural etc. identities”. Here, the crucial point to be addressed is the fact that media is a carrier of signification and since it is a space for representation and it bears the claim of revealing reality and following objectivity, it stands as the sphere of battle for the represented and even unrepresented.

The importance of media in maintaining hegemony is best illustrated by Althusser as he identifies different forms of media as a kind of ideological state apparatuses (ISA). According to Althusser (1971), state power and hegemony can be maintained through various ideological state apparatuses *functioning by “ideology”* (original emphasis) rather than “by violence”. He defines ideological state apparatuses as “a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions” (Althusser 1971:79). Underlying the plurality of ideological state apparatuses, in addition the family ISA, the legal ISA and the like, he refers to the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.). Bearing in mind the Althusser’s statement that “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practices, or practices” (1971:82), we may take a critical stance in both language and practices of mainstream media. Since as he points out that “ideology interpellates individuals as subjects” (Althusser 1971:84), every concrete individual is constituted by ideology which is shaped by state power. In this respect, with the rising importance of identity politics, decline of decisive and central role of nation state, emergence of new media, culture and practices of political involvement, people today do not content themselves with the subject positions offered by state power. Rather, in line with the features of late-modern era, people pursue a continuous and self-reflexive identification process based on more spontaneity, openness and fragmentation rather than the principle of fixation. Therefore, the status

of highly centralized, nontransparent and hierarchical mainstream media and its potential for democracy has been questioned. Today, we bear witness to a period in which the quest for new forms of democracies namely, radical and plural democracy and dialogic democracy employ the alternative media as a tool for declaration.

4.1.1. Radical and Plural Democracy

The concept of radical and plural democracy has been introduced by Chantal Mouffe in her eye-opening book *the Return of the Political*. Underlining the inadequacies of liberal democracy, Mouffe proposes a type of democracy including pluralism, variety and heterogeneity in the light of liberty and equality. The picture at issue is defined as that after the collapse of socialism; the world politics has witnessed the rise of particularisms of any kind challenging Western universalism. The universalization of liberal democracy threatens the existence of the political since as Mouffe (1993:3) states that “the political cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution, or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or level of society. It must be conceived as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition”. Political movements, in any kind, manifest the vitality and dynamism of the political. However, liberal democracy has a great tendency to regard these movements as pathological or reflections of irrational forces. With a harsh critique of liberal democracy, according to Mouffe, the aim should be exercise a more radical and plural democracy devoid of any essentialist understanding.

In the framework of radical and plural democracy, every identity is conceived as relational and every identity is a sign for difference. Thus, ‘different’ or ‘other’ plays the role of ‘constitutive outside’, which determines our existence in a mediated way. In the issue of collective identifications, the formation of “we” identity is not

confined to “them”. Further, Mouffe indicates that since collapse of socialism, world politics has not dealt with political antagonisms based on a friend/enemy or an essentialist we/them relation but antagonisms based on identities in any kind such as ethnic, national and religious identities. Mouffe (1993:5) states that “the current blurring of political frontiers between left and right is harmful for democratic politics, as it impedes the constitution of distinctive political identities. This in turn fosters disaffection towards political parties and discourages participation in the political process. Hence, the growth of other collective identities around religious, nationalist or ethnic forms of identification”. In line with this picture, it is believed that such a disaffection and discouragement will call for ‘anti-politics’ which will bring the end of democracy. Therefore, as the name of the book, it is necessary to restore ‘the return of the political’ in a way, which will respond to features of the contemporary political climate. Further, it is important to emphasize that antagonisms can come into being through many forms and the hope for their total elimination remains only as ideal.

According to Mouffe,

A radical democratic perspective requires a view of the political that is different not only from the liberal but also from the communitarian one. The pre-modern view of the political community unified around a substantive idea of the common good that is found in some communitarians is antithetical to the pluralism that defines liberal democracy as a new political form of society. Radical democrats agree on the need to recover such ideas as ‘common good’, ‘civic virtue’ and ‘political community’, but they believe that they must be reformulated in a way that makes them compatible with the recognition of conflict, division and antagonism (1992:12).

In line with the characteristics of late-modernity, radical democracy aims at responding to a comprehensive agenda of various and conflicting interests of particular communities. However, although she desires to radicalize the idea of pluralism in order to extend the scope of the democratic revolution, Mouffe believes

that it is necessary to break ties with the principles of rationalism, individualism and universalism. Mouffe (1993:7) states “Only on that condition will it be possible to apprehend the multiplicity of forms of subordination that exist in social relations and to provide a framework for the articulation of the different democratic struggles - around gender, race, class, sexuality, environment and others. This does not imply the rejection of any idea of rationality, individuality or universality, but affirms that they are necessarily plural, discursively constructed and entangled with power relations”. This understanding favours the political with all its complexity and plurality without seeking a final consensus.

The particular understanding of radical democracy, proposed by Mouffe, is completely different from the strand followed by Habermas and others. The particular type of radical and participatory democracy that Habermas favours is invested with divergent political organization and consequences. This universalistic understanding of radical democracy requires ‘undistorted communication’ as its principle and it seeks to reach a final reconciliation of conflicting value claims. To put it differently, in Mouffe’s (1992:13) words, “they envisage the possibility of a politics from which antagonism and division would have disappeared. Our understanding of radical democracy, on the contrary, postulates the very impossibility of a final realization of democracy. It affirms that unresolvable tension between the principles of equality and liberty is the very condition for the preservation of the indeterminacy and undecidability that is constitutive of modern democracy. Moreover, it constitutes the principal guarantee against any attempt to realize a final closure that would result in the elimination of the political and the negation of democracy”. Therefore, radical and plural democracy with its emphasis on conflict and antagonism elevates vitality, dynamism and creativity of the political.

The understanding of radical and plural politics requires a theory of subject to participate in new social movements and reveal radical forms of political expression, participation and mobilization. Radical politics, as Mouffe (1993:12) defines, considers the subject as “a decentred, detotalized agent, a subject constructed at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions between which there exists no a priori or necessary relation and whose articulation is the result of hegemonic practices. Consequently, no identity is ever definitely established, there always being a certain degree of openness and ambiguity in the way the different subject positions are articulated”. Therefore, with this non-essentialist understanding of the subject, radical politics cannot confine the scope of political action to only several central political philosophies such as Marxism based on essential and universal principles. On the contrary, without undermining the significance of universalism, radical politics and democracy creates a new form of articulation between the universal and particular which will attribute new rights and freedoms to various single-issue communities. Besides its emphasis on the particular, radical democracy welcomes different forms of rationality and tradition. Further, radical democracy necessitates the creation of new common positions such as antiracism and antisexism for reaching the common articulation. In this way, the needs and demands of each interest or identity group can be responded according to the principle of democratic equivalence.

Non-essentialist understanding of the subject and the community favoured by radical democracy is accompanied by a new form of individuality that is plural and democratic. Mouffe indicates that liberal individualism falls short of responding the complex structure of contemporary politics. Therefore, in the words of Mouffe (1993:20), “our societies are confronted with the proliferation of political spaces

which are radically new and different and which demand that we abandon the idea of a unique constitutive space of the constitution of the political, which is particular to both liberalism and civic republicanism”. In other words, in parallel with emergence of multiple, contradictory subject positions, and various discourses, the political has become to be exercised in many alternative political spaces. With the information and communication revolution, the scope and quality of these spaces have been subjected to a complete and profound reformation.

However, it should be noted that while radical and plural democracy aims at extending its boundaries to plurality and heterogeneity as much as possible, it does not support the ideal of complete disclosure. Radical and plural democracy is distinguished from postmodern politics giving priority to plurality, heterogeneity and incommensurability with its well-defined political programme. As Mouffe (1992:13) notes, “for the recognition of plurality not to lead to a complete *indifferentiation* and *indifference*, criteria must exist to decide between what is admissible and what is not.” Therefore, radical and plural democracy supports plurality and variety without damaging principles of equality and liberty.

4.1.2. Dialogic Democracy

The understanding of radical and plural democracy introduced by Mouffe is complemented by the concept of ‘dialogic democracy’ proposed by Giddens in his book *Beyond Left and Right*. Giddens illustrates the features and structure of dialogic democracy by underlining its distinctiveness from liberal and deliberative democracy. Liberal democracy is described as a system of representation and it utilizes a form of government based on regular elections, universal suffrage, freedom of conscience and universal right to hold an office and establish political associations

in line with the principles of pluralism and expression of various interests. According to Fukuyama (1992: xiii), liberal democracy stands as “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” and the “final form of human government”. Even though liberal democracy functions well in giving opportunity to people to represent their particular interests and voice their problems in the public space, it is a clearly acknowledged fact that such a democracy is exercised by a group distant from voters and it mostly deals with intra-party and interparty concerns rather than increasing the welfare of the society. Moreover, despite its principle of plurality, within liberal democracy, only a minority of plurality can have a chance to express their ideas, concerns and problems.

In such a political environment, deliberative democracy stands as an opponent to liberal democracy. According to Miller (1992:55), deliberative model “starts from the premise that political preferences will conflict and the purpose of democratic institutions must be to resolve this conflict”. Further, similar to discursive and deliberative understanding of public space supported by Habermas, Miller (1992) notes that in order to the process of conflict resolution be democratic, it has to be an open and uncoerced discussion of the issue for reaching an agreed agreement. During this process, public deliberation over policy issues is regarded as a signifier of democracy. The most crucial point to be addressed in this discussion is that, as Giddens (1994:114) points out, deliberative democracy might bring about greater openness and transparency to policy-making mechanisms such as parliaments and congressional assemblies compared to liberal democratic systems.

While we can assert that Miller’s understanding of deliberative democracy can be regarded as a betterment in the quality of political participation and expression, since it confines democratization practices to formal political realm, it falls short of

responding the changes in late-modern (post-traditional) society. As Giddens (1994:111) states, “democratization processes today are driven by the expansion of social reflexivity and detraditionalization [...] Many of the most important changes which affect people’s lives today do not originate in the formal political sphere and can only in some part be coped with by it”. Today, practices of democratization have been fundamentally altered due to influences of globalization, computer-mediated communication and changing nature of politics. Therefore, people, namely voters in liberal democracy, tend to participate in politics more directly without having almost any need for a representative in the formal political sphere. Moreover, in line with the rise of life politics and identity politics, today we experience politicization of everyday life. Therefore, this new political and social atmosphere requires a new conception of democracy, namely dialogic democracy completely different from its preceding forms.

In the words of Giddens (1994:112), “dialogic democratization is not an extension of liberal democracy or even a complement to it; in so far as it proceeds, however, it creates forms of social interchange which can contribute substantially, perhaps even decisively, to the reconstructing of social solidarity. Dialogic democracy is not primarily about either the proliferation of *rights* or the representation of *interests*. Rather it concerns the furthering of cultural cosmopolitanism and is a prime building of that connection of autonomy and solidarity”. Dialogic democracy favours the autonomy of communication in the form of a dialogue. However, such a process of communication does not resemble the ideal speech situation supported by Habermas. Dialogic democracy regards social reflexivity as a condition of day-to-day activities and formation of collective organization. Further, dialogic democracy does not aim at reaching consensus between conflicting ideas and interests. Giddens (1994: 115)

indicates “dialogic democracy presumes only that dialogue in a public space provides a means of living along with the other in a relation of mutual *tolerance* – whether that ‘other’ be an individual or a global community of religious believers”. Therefore, in such an understanding of democracy, there is no place for fundamentalisms in any kind.

Giddens underlines the fact that dialogic democracy has reflected mainly in four connected areas, namely personal life including marriage, sexuality, friendship, social movements such as feminist movement and ecological movement and self-help groups, organizational arena and finally global order. In these areas, the principles of mutual involvement, responsibility, mutual tolerance and active trust have played significant roles.

With all these features, according to Giddens, dialogic democracy paves the way for the project of democratizing of democracy within the framework of liberal democracy. For Giddens, in order to democratize democracy, a series of changes is regarded necessary. As Giddens (1999) states, this project necessitates the decentralization of state, greater transparency and openness of the public sphere, introduction of new forms of democracy other than voting process such as local direct democracy and electronic referenda, and renewal of civil society.

4.2. A Multi-theoretical Approach to Alternative Media

In line with the characteristics of contemporary political landscape, developments in information and communication technologies, globalization, detraditionalization and high level of social reflexivity, I believe that these ideals of alternative forms of democracies can only be realized by means of alternative media. As mentioned before, communication media has been utilize as a means of hegemony and they are

invested with ideological motivations. In other words, mainstream media mostly functions as an ideological apparatus of the state in order to deepen and maintain the hegemony. Therefore, we can easily infer that alternative forms of democracies following the principles of plurality, respect for difference, liberty and equality, heterogeneity, mutual tolerance, trust and dialogue cannot find any place to be performed within the sphere of mainstream media. Since the state protects and maintains its existence by preserving a stable social order, difference is regarded as a source of change, which threatens the harmonious and unified social structure constructed by the state. Difference and its representative groups can only have a say during regular elections within liberal democracy. As discussed before, liberal democracy fails in the scope of integrating plurality in its agenda in terms of representation and discourages citizens to participate more in politics. On the other hand, with alternative democracies and alternative media which are highly criticized by the state paves the way for democratization of information, expression, representation which liberal democracy has fallen short of.

To have a comprehensive understanding regarding the structure of alternative media, I will appeal to the book *Understanding Alternative Media* first published in 2007 by Olga Guedes Bailey, Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpentier. They believe that ‘alternative’ communication stands significant for daily life, personal and collective politics and our sense of belonging and identity. Today, we are living in a world in which mediated and computer-mediated communication functions as space for expressing and representing public and private ideas and collective actions. Bailey et al. point out major changes happened in both global and local media landscapes leading to a reconfiguration. They (2007: xii) state that “this reconfiguration has been brought about by the confluence of several features: new technology (the

proliferation of cable television channels and the explosion of sites on the World Wide Web); the fragmentation and fracturing of media spaces; the liberalization of media markets; and the possibilities opened up by the reduction in the costs of producing media". These changes have touched upon many issues and problems resulted from weaknesses of liberal democracy and hegemony of state. In their words (Bailey et al.2007: xii), "these shifts have implications for the exercise of democracy, power, inclusion, comprising the right to communicate and to be represented in the media, and public participation in the political, public sphere both through engagement with the ongoing politics of recognition of different social groups and/or the global social struggles of broader political causes".

The book refrains from proposing a set of various distinct forms of alternative media based on the principle of binary oppositions such as non-commercial and commercial media. Rather, it aims to unfold the nature of alternative media by focusing its relationality and contingency to the issue of production, distribution and consumption of media content. Further, in the book, Bailey et al. (2008: xii) analyse the politics of communication "that is concerned with forms of mediated communication that are 'alternative', not only in relation to the mainstream but also in their potential to voice ideas which are important and distinctive in their own right, that are not necessarily counter-hegemonic, but are still of significance for different communities". They handle alternative media in terms of greater empowerment that it provides to a large majority of ordinary citizens.

Bailey et al. follow the view that media cannot exist and practice by itself, rather, its functioning is shaped by economic, political and cultural landscapes in local, national, regional or international level. Therefore, it is crucial to understand and discuss the structure and influence of alternative media in light of the perspectives of

democracy and context of the political introduced by Mouffe. With its heavy investments, alternative media has fostered participatory models of democracy and it has expanded the scope of the political. In Barber's words (1984), participatory models of democracy have desired the participation of 'real' citizens and their active involvement in democracy. Thus, these models have refused the citizen-power distantiation of generated by representative democracy and elitists democratic theories. Furthermore, since scope of the political cannot be confine to formal political systems and institutions established by representative democracy and similar to Foucauldian conception of power referring to the fact that power is not crystalized in the hands of state but 'power is everywhere' diffused and embedded in discourse, the political issues various different problems and issues within society such as family and workplace. Therefore, the political and accordingly alternative media can integrate many issues and problems invested power relations in any kind into their agenda.

Although we can illustrate a general picture of 'alternative media' according to its relationship to mainstream media, the political and various conceptions of democracy, the concept refers to various fractions such as 'community media', 'civil society media', 'rhizomatic media', 'radical alternative media' and 'citizen media' having different objectives, principles, mechanism of production/consumption/distribution of content and organization structures. Therefore, to define 'alternative media' by a mono-theoretical approach will not correspond to the diversity, plurality and heterogeneity of the media. For creating a more comprehensive picture, Bailey et al. combines four theoretical approaches composed of relational and essentialist perspectives. This multi-theoretical approach to alternative media has been supported by Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) the

conception of political identity. As discussed above, their whole framework is constructed on the rejection of essentialism regarding political identity and followingly, they state (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:111) that “There is no single underlying principle fixing- and hence constituting- the whole field of differences”. This lack of fixation both refers to a process of identification rather than a stable and unified identity and the structure of alternative media. Such a perspective functions a guide to distinguish essentialist and relationist approaches of alternative media. Bailey et al. indicates that “The more essentialist approaches tend to see identities as stable, independent and possessing a ‘true’ essence. The more relationist approaches incorporate notions of fluidity and contingency, see identities as mutually dependent and ignore the existence of ‘true’ essences.” It should be noted that although some of these four approaches to alternative media namely, alternative media serving the community, alternative media as an alternative to mainstream media, alternative media as a part of civil society, and alternative media as rhizome might gave potential to embody an essentialist approach, they are still open for relationist interpretation which I will provide in the following sections.

	Media-centred	Society-centred
Autonomous identity of community media (essentialist)	Approach I: Serving the community	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> Approach III: Part of civil society </div> Approach IV: Rhizome
Identity of community media in relation to other identities (relationalist)	Approach II: An alternative to mainstream	

Table 5: Positioning the four theoretical approaches, Bailey et al. (2007:7)

4.2.1. Alternative Media Serving the Community

The concept of ‘community’ has been a topic of controversy in line with the changing structural characteristics of society in different historical periods. While the definition has been referred to a geographical space, and ethnic and religious affiliations, community has been mostly emerged based on commonality, belonging and sharing. Moreover, the term ‘community’ has been defined differently by various academic disciplines. Discussions regarding community within sociology highly refer to Tönnies’s formulation revealing the distinctive characters of community as *Gemeinschaft* and society as *Gesellschaft*. In this paradigm, while community is composed of relations which are “intimate, enduring and based upon a clear understanding of where each person stands in society” (Bell and Newby, 1972:24), and based on “sentimental attachment to the conventions and mores of a beloved

place enshrined in a tradition which was handed over the generations from family to family” (Newby 1980:15), society refers to “large-scale, impersonal, calculative and contractual relationships” having the makings of continuous tension among its members (Newby 1980:15).

Criticizing the conceptions of community based on geography and ethnicity, Bailey et al. (2007:8) underlines the structural conceptualizations of community “by supplementing the geographical with the non-geographical and by supplementing the structural/material with the cultural”. This reconceptualization referring supplementing the geographical with the non-geographical is exemplified by the ‘community of interest’. Communitality of interests has the power of unifying people around a common purpose, problem and demand. As Lewis (1993:13) asserts, a community of interest can be formed ‘across conurbations, nations and continents’ by transcending geographically defined spaces. Further, Poole (1995) mentions the difference between communities based on geographical spaces and territories, and communitality of interest or interest group such as Jewish community. According to this view, people suffering from same conditions or problems such as cancer and social exclusion may come together and form a community of interest.

Another form resulting from this restructuring refers to the notion of ‘community of practice’ developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. ‘Community of practice’ is organized around the principle of shared practice. According to Wenger (1998:45), “a community of practice is a joint enterprise, with mutual engagement of the members involved and with a shared repertoire of communal resources”. Further, as Wenger et al. (2002:4) remark, communities of practice refer to “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis”.

Although it is possible to encounter with these forms of communities in geographically defined space and time, with the development and increasing significance of information and communication technologies (ICTs), the conception of time and space, and accordingly community has subjected to major transformation. Since we tend to define a community by referring its existence in a defined space and in a particular period of time, and ICTs have the power to transcend the conventional conception of space and time, today, communities are organized in more non-essentialist, spontaneous and rhizomatic way. In other words, contemporary communities are also formed as ‘virtual’ or ‘online’ communities in cyberspace composed of space of flows and timeless time. As there are many approaches to communities formed in geographically defined spaces, we can see various perspectives regarding the structure of virtual communities. According to Howard Rheingold (2001), virtual communities are only composed of the following elements:

Organized around affinities, shared interests, bringing together people who did not necessarily know each other before meeting on-line.

Many to many media...

Text-based, evolving into text plus graphics – based communications...

Relatively uncoupled from face to face social life in geographic communities.

Similar to this view, Castells (1996:352) defines the virtual community as:

a self-defined electronic network of interactive communication organized around a shared interest or purpose, although sometimes communication becomes the goal in itself. Such communities may be relatively formalized, as in the case of hosted conferences or bulletin board systems, or be spontaneously formed by social networks, which keep logging into the network to send and retrieve messages in a chosen time pattern (either delayed or in real time).

Last but not the least, another definition proposed by Stone (1991:85) regarding virtual community as “incontrovertibly social spaces in which people still meet face-to-face, but under new definitions of both “meet“ and “face”....Virtual communities [are] passage points for collections of common beliefs and practices that united people who were physically separated” (cited in Jones, 1995b:19).

Many scholars have noticed the similarities of experience and practices between virtual and online communities and geographically defined communities (Jones 1995) and the formation of powerful and unified groupings in virtual communities having the subversive potential for change in various fields (Kitchin 1998). Moreover, as Hollander (2000) points out, we see a form of convergence between these communities in terms of the use of information and communication technologies.

Apart from these approaches to community, the second type of reconceptualization aiming at supplementing the structural/material with the cultural includes Fish’s (1980) and Lindlof’s (1988) concept of ‘interpretative community’, Cohen’s (1985) ‘community of meaning’ and Anderson’s (1983) ‘imagined community’. While Fish developed the concept of interpretative community by analysing literary criticism, Lindlof defined audience as an interpretative community. Further, Cohen (1985) dealt with symbolic structure of community and the role of culture in the existence of community. Cohen (1985:20) states that communities stand as “worlds of meaning in the minds of their members”. As the final form, the concept ‘imagined community’ developed by Anderson underlines the constructed nature of a political community and it stresses the contingent nature of community formation.

As every media, alternative media targets a specific community independent of their form and organization. However, alternative media differs from the other types of media in terms of type of relation it builds with the community namely, providing two-way communication, promoting public participation and expression. With regard to the issue of participation, Bailey et al. (2007:11) emphasize the need for touching upon the difference between ‘participation *in* the media’ and ‘through the media’ resembling the distinction revealed by Wasko and Mosco (1992:7) between democratization *in* and *through* the media.

Bailey et al. (2007:11) states that “participation *in* the media deals with the participation of non-professionals in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media decision-making (structural participation)”. They note that these forms of media participation pave the way for performance of active citizens in many (micro) sphere and they function as a map for proper democratic and civic attitude to be performed in possible macro-participation. On the other hand, ‘participation *through* the media’ defined by Bailey et al. (2007:11) embodies “the opportunities for extensive participation in public debate and for self- representation in public spaces” providing an implicit reference to macro-participation. Even though the issue of participation has been regarded as a site for dialogue and deliberation taking place in various approaches to public spheres such as the discursive understanding of public sphere proposed by Habermas based on consensus seeking rational-critical debate, and ideal speech situation, there exists another line of thinking regarding the participation emphasizing the significance of difference, antagonisms and conflict. Bailey et al. (2007:11) remark that “Despite their differences, both consensus- and conflict-oriented models stress the need for citizens to participate in these processes of dialogue, debate and deliberation”.

It is a widely acknowledged fact that alternative media has revealed its power and success to foster greater participation in the media. Berrigan (1979:8) asserting that alternative media should be identified by the access by the community and participation of the community defines the alternative media as “the media to which members of the community have access, for information, education, entertainment, when they want access. They are media in which the community participates, as planners, producers, performers. They are the means for expression of the community, rather than for the community”.

Production	Reception
<p><i>Access to the content-producing organization</i></p> <p>→ Ability to produce content and have it broadcast/published</p>	<p><i>Access to the content considered relevant</i></p> <p>→ Ability to receive and interpret content</p>
<p><i>Participation in the produced content</i></p> <p>→ Co-deciding on content</p>	
<p><i>Participation in the content-producing organization</i></p> <p>→ Co-deciding on policy → Evaluating the content</p>	

Table 6: Access and participation of the community, (Bailey 2007: 14)

Since ordinary people can easily access to, find a chance to participate and get involved in the production/consumption/distribution chain of media content and organization, alternative media can realize the democratization of communication. Therefore, disadvantaged, excluded and sub-altern social groups represented or even not-represented from the eyes of mainstream media have find a chance to voice and

clearly express their identities from their mouths without having a need for an medium to represent them. Moreover, these groups can claim their rights, resist to hegemonic discourses and practices and create social consciousness regarding various issues by producing and distributing media content in different sites of alternative media.

4.2.2. Alternative Media as an Alternative to Mainstream Media

This approach revolves around the distinction between mainstream and alternative media regarding alternative media either as a supplement to mainstream media or as a counter-hegemonic critique of the mainstream. Since mainstream media is invested with the concepts such as ideology and hegemony in Gramscian sense, accordingly alternative media is characterized on the basis of its relations to these notions. As Atton (2002:15) points out, “we might consider the entire range of alternative and radical media as representing challenges to hegemony, whether on an explicitly political platform, or employing the kinds of indirect challenges through experimentation and transformation of existing roles, routines, emblems and signs.....at the heart of counter-hegemonic subcultural style”.

In order to better comprehend the function of alternative media, it is necessary to have deep understanding of the concept of “hegemony” in Gramscian sense and its close relation to mainstream media. Gramsci proposes the view that ideological struggles cannot be exercised only in the sphere of state and its institutions since the power is not concentrated only in the hands of state. Mainstream media function as means of reproduction for the ideologies of dominant and hegemonic groups. As Bailey et al. (2007:16) remarks, “Mainstream media are likely to construct and grant legitimacy to ‘leading’ social values through constant exposure of them to the

audience. In this process, mainstream media become ideological as they reproduce a constructed and preferred view of 'reality'. In addition, they have the power to define which specific issues to bring to the public arena, and they become ideological by giving priority to the ideas of the main social actors such as the state, politicians, and private sector over the views of disfranchised minorities in civil society".

In such a picture, alternative media functions as a site for meaning production, representation of marginalized and excluded identities, lines of thoughts, ways of life and life practices. Through alternative media, different versions of 'reality' and 'truth' can have a chance to be publicised via use of various forms of language, discourse and representation. Therefore, alternative media open the way for voicing counter-hegemonic and non-conformist forms of expression of the misrepresented, under-represented and disadvantageous groups in society.

Although there has been a great contingency regarding the concepts of alternative and mainstream media, Bailey et al. (2007:18) illustrate the general characteristics of these two types of media. Accordingly, mainstream media is pictured as:

- Large-scale and geared towards large, homogeneous (segments of) audiences;
- State-owned organizations or commercial companies;
- Vertically (or hierarchically) structured organizations staffed by professionals;
- Carriers of dominant discourses and representations.

On the other hand, alternative media reveal a contrary stance towards the features defined above:

- Small-scale and oriented towards specific communities, possibly disadvantaged groups, respecting their diversity;
- Independent of state and market;

- Horizontally (or non-hierarchically) structured, allowing for the facilitation of audience access and participation within the frame of democratization and multiplicity;
- Carriers of non-dominant (possibly counter-hegemonic) discourses and representations, stressing the importance of self-representation.

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Examples of the domain</i>
	Rejection of commercial motives
Motive or purpose	Assertion of human, cultural, educational, ethnic ends Oppose the power structure and its behaviour
Sources of funding	Rejection of state or municipal grants Rejection of advertising revenue
Regulatory dispensation	Supervised by distinct institutions Independent / 'free' Breaking somebody's rules, though rarely all of them in every respect
Organizational structure	Horizontal organization Allowing 'full' participation Democratization of communication
Criticizing professional practices	Encouraging voluntary engagement Access and participation for non-professionals Different criteria for news selection
Message content	Supplementing or contradicting dominant discourses or representations Expressing an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives

Relationship with audience and/or consumers	Degree of user/consumer control Allowing the needs and goals to be articulated by the audience/ consumers themselves Democratization of communication
Composition of the Audience	Young people, women, rural populations Diversity and multiplicity
Range of diffusion	Local rather than regional or national
Nature of research methodology	Qualitative, ethnographical and long-term research

Table 7: Defining alternative media, (Bailey 2007: 19)

The approach handling alternative media to the mainstream media differs in organizational and content level. Bailey et al. (2007:18) emphasize that at the organizational level, the existence of alternative media reveals the opportunity that media can exist independent of state and market. Therefore, there still exists a ‘third sector’ reserved for alternative media in terms of organization. More horizontal and less hierarchical structure of organization of alternative media signal the alternative approaches in media organization. Furthermore, on the content level, alternative media provide the opportunity to produce, consume and distribute counter-hegemonic and non-conformist ideologies, representations and discourses, which are under-represented or not represented by mainstream media. With the greater level of participation and involvement, ordinary citizens including minorities, members of various sub-cultures, social movements and interest groups rather than media professionals have a chance to self-representation and voice their demands, problems

and rights in diverse formats and genres depending on the structure and facilities of the media.

4.2.3. Linking Alternative Media to Civil Society

The concept 'civil society' has been defined contingently by different disciplines in different historical periods in line with the changing dynamics of societies. Keane (2009:1) illustrates the transformation of civil society as:

During the revolutionary period 1750-1850, the traditional language of civil society (*societas civilis*), which had until then referred to a peaceful political order governed by law, underwent a profound transformation. Contrasted with government, civil society meant a realm of social life-market exchanges, charitable groups, clubs and voluntary associations, independent churches and publishing houses- institutionally separated from territorial state institutions. This is the sense in which civil society is still understood today: it is a term both describes and anticipates a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be nonviolent, self-organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension, both with each other and with the governmental institutions that "frame", constrict and enable their activities.

Despite these various conceptualizations regarding civil society, the common principle crosscutting all the definitions refers to its complex relationship to state and market. Following this line, Bailey et al (2007) classifies civil society into two fractions namely, a generalist conceptions supported by the legacies of Hegel and Marx, and a minimalist theories proposed by Gramsci and Habermas. In generalist conception, while Hegel includes market into the sphere of civil society and state remains as a guard to maintaining balance between private and public interests, Marx (1975:153) characterizes civil society as a site of domination and in which a human being 'acts as a private individual, regards other men as means, degrades himself into a means and becomes a plaything of alien power". On the other hand, in minimalist conception, civil society works relatively independent from state and market. Therefore, through this understanding, citizens find a chance to organize around a

specific problem for the purpose of social change, express their counter-hegemonic motivations and ideas.

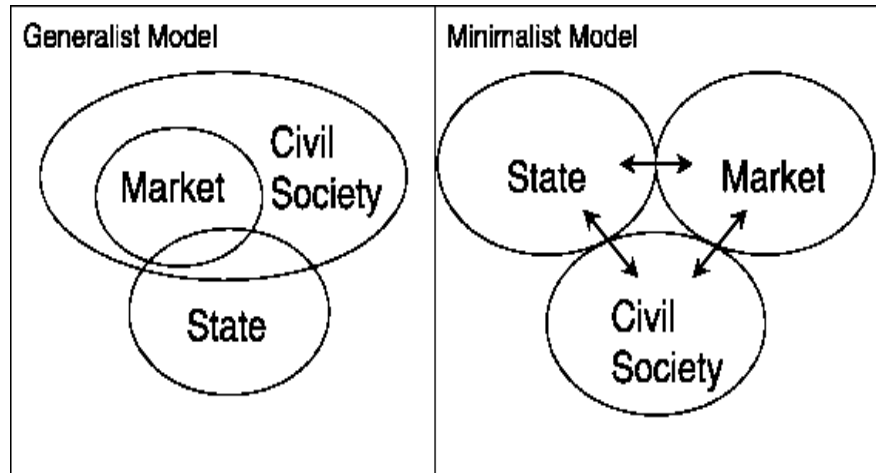


Figure 1: Generalist and minimalist models of civil society, (Bailey 2007: 21)

As Cohen and Arato (1992: ix) states, civil society signifies “a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and form of communication”. Bearing in mind all these approaches, the important point to be underlined refers to the fact in contemporary late-modern era, as Giddens state (1999:78), an active civil society is the necessary element for third way politics and renewal of civil society requires the collaboration between government and civil society. Therefore, conceptualization of civil society according to its opposition to state and market cannot function efficiently in today’s social and political conjuncture.

It is easy to note that civil society embodies various and conflicting fractions residing in society and it can be regarded as a site for democracy with its plurality of content. Alternative media, as a quite efficient site for democratization, includes multiple and

diverse interest groups and encourages them for participation, civic engagement and involvement through the media. Even though these efforts may seem marginal, they firstly lead to micro-participation through which citizens learn the map and principles of civic attitude, then it will take the form of macro-participation for democratic struggles and even social movements. In addition, following Servaes (1999:260), by conceiving alternative media as part of civil society, alternative media can be regarded as ‘third voice’ different from state media and private commercial media. Regarding the issue, Thompson (1995:122) sheds light on the history of current organization of media and reveals the significance role of media deregulation and neo-liberal discourses on media policies on organization of public broadcasting companies to internalize market-led approaches. Therefore, these factors lead commercial media and public broadcasting companies to aim at maximizing audience without considering the quality, reliability of the content and pursuing general interest of society. Herein, types of media such as civil society media, community media and citizen media reveal remarkable efforts to bring forth the issues related to several communities in line with the objectives of alternative media.

4.2.4. Alternative Media as Rhizome

As discussed in the previous section, civil society can no longer be thought independent of its relation to market and state on the condition that state is reformed in a more democratic and pluralist way. According to Bailey et al., such a relationist approach and the characteristics of alternative media are radicalized and organized in light of the metaphor of the rhizome introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Further, the metaphor of rhizome resembles a convergence of rhizomatic and arborescent thinking. Bailey et al. defines the arborescent structure as “a linear, hierarchic and sedentary” composed of various smaller sub-categories emanating from larger

branch-like formations that correspond to the organization of the state according to Deleuze and Guattari. On the other hand, the rhizomatic has the non-linear, anarchic, insurgent, spontaneous and nomadic structure. As Deleuze and Guattari (1983:47-49) states:

The rhizome connects any point with any other point, and none of its features necessarily refers to features of the same kind. It puts into play very different regimes of signs and even states of non-sings...It is not made of units but of dimensions, or rather of shifting directions. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle, through which it pushes and overflows...Unlike a structure defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relation between these points and bi-univocal relations between these positions, the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentation and stratification as dimensions, but also lines of flight or of deterritorialization as the maximal dimension according to which, by following it, the multiplicity changes its nature as metamorphoses...The rhizome is an anti-genealogy....In a rhizome what is at stake is the relationship with sexuality, but also with the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, the natural and the artificial...all kinds of "becomings.

Such an illustration of the rhizome including heterogeneity, plurality, contingency and fragmentation fosters the unique structure of alternative media as a site for radical forms of democracy and as a mean for more non-essentialist understanding and organization of civil society. In terms of its relationship to state and market, since the rhizomatic approach embodies a quite different attitude in term of the place of civil society. As Bailey et al. (2007:28) remarks, the connections that the rhizome within the context of alternative media forms may be from the spheres of the state and market without completely assimilated or incorporated by them. "These more complex and contingent positions bring them sometimes to violently critique hegemony and in other cases to playfully use and abuse the dominant order. This interplay between resistance and cooperation does legitimize the utilisation of the label of transhegemonic media". Therefore, alternative media does not always function for counter-hegemonic purposes and motivations as it is usually conceived.

However, it is still possible to claim that following Deleuze and Guattari, alternative media at least carry the potential for destabilization and deterritorialization.

This particular approach to alternative media is characterized by its elusive and contingent nature. As opposed to the previous approach dealing with the relation between civil society and alternative media in terms of the formation of public sphere, alternative media as rhizome functions, as Bailey et al. identifies, as the crossroads where people participating different social and political movements and struggles such as students', ethnic's, workers' and homosexuals' movements come and act together in collaboration. Thus, in the words of Bailey et al. (2007:29), alternative media not only function as an instrument giving voice to a group of people related to a specific issue, but also become a medium for rearticulating impartiality and neutrality and grouping people and organizations already active in different types of struggle for equality (or other issues)". Such an approach to alternative media goes hand in hand with the theory of political subject and the process of identification supported by the framework of radical and plural democracy.

In the light of these approaches, we see that analysing any kind of an alternative medium requires multi-theoretical approaches whether they are society-centered or media-centered in order to have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding regarding its function, purpose and motivation, organizational structure and its connectedness to macro structures and institutions. Even though I have introduced four approaches to alternative media which are more participatory, democratic and emancipatory in nature at first glance, these approaches are also invested with threats and weaknesses.

3.3. Political Participation and Expression through Social Media

The emergence of the Internet and new communication and information technologies (ICTs) have paved the way for remarkable transformations and reformations in the forms of political expression, participation and involvement. This process of restructuration should be analysed in the light of characteristics of new media, especially social media and the facilities it provides. I believe that the most significant reason for such major transformations lies in the fact that social media have altered the scope and meaning of participation and accordingly it has opened a way for emergence of a culture of participation. In contemporary world, although people have much broader opportunities for forming various collective political movements and struggles in accordance with their interests, political activity of them mostly remains confined to sharing opinion in a few words, changing profile picture and posting striking and exciting news and videos to their profiles on social networks sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

While before the development of the Internet, people remained unknown and invisible to each other, today Internet users have to be integrated in a new form of publicness, which can be described as networked publicness. The concept discussed heavily by Mizuko Ito, in her book *Networked Publics (2008)* is explained in terms of what has resulted from people's engagement with digital media in the social, cultural, and technological realms. Referring to a collective of people, the concept is beyond audience or consumer, but encourages notions of engagement, complexity, and agency. Facebook as a social network site takes part in this new form of publicness and enables an exchange of ideas and reformation of social, political and cultural identity. The four themes utilized for networked publics include accessibility, or the lowered cost of engaging in those networks; peer to peer and

many to many distribution; value at the edges, the ability of people to take advantage of much larger and expanded networks of people, ideas and goods; and aggregation, the networks of knowledge and culture that grow out of the networks of content and people. In addition to this conceptualization, boyd (2011) further elaborates the concept of networked publics and defines it as “publics that are restructured by networked technologies. As such they are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice.” (2011: 39). She underlines four properties of networked publics namely, persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability.

It is a highly acknowledged fact that ICTs function as supplementary and alternative ways to create and reveal democratic political engagement and participation. Moreover, it is evident that the Internet and social media have brought many opportunities to people for actively participating production of news, reaching a much broader source of information from many different channels and more critically decoding the messages generated by mass media. Information gathered through ICTs and online interactions between people (Shah et al. 2005) tend to increase the level of civic participation and engagement. Moreover, as Rojas and Puig-i-Abril (2009) remark, informational uses of (ICTs) foster expressive forms of political participation invested with mobilizing efforts leading to ultimately civic participation. There exists many definitions of political participation such as an activity aiming at influencing and interfering government action (Verba et al.,1995) and including communal activities such as attending community groups besides concerning for government action (Putnam,1995). However, according to Rojas and Puig-i-Abril (2007:29), “expressive political participation is a subset of political

participation-political participation with a dimension of public expressiveness”. Further, Rojas and Puig-i-Abril (2009: 907) “It is particularly critical for societies in which democratic institutions are not fully established...Expressive political participation in the online domain for such societies may operate as a precursor to other forms of participation, including voting, donation activities, and community volunteering in the offline domain”. Moreover, regarding the relationship between social network sites, political engagement and democracy, Zúñiga et al. (2012: 329-330) indicates that “Social network sites (SNS) seem to provide adequate and relevant information to reinvigorate the democratic process. SNS can foster norms of reciprocity and trust and, therefore, create opportunities for civic and political engagement”. Therefore, it is a pertinent remark that expressive political participation is a form of micro-participation invested with the potential for civic participation to many different struggles and movements leading to macro-participation aiming at further democracy.

However, while new information and communication technologies have promoted the idea of democratization through diverse types of activism, their peculiar practices in cyberspace as reflections of political participation, expression and involvement, their intensity and quality are open to question. There are many concepts emerged defining a particular mode of activism and political engagement through internet such as slactivism, clicktivism, hactivism, tactical media, computerized activism and electronic civil media disobedience. Slactivism refers to such meanings as “feeling-good” measures, in support of an issue or social cause, that have little or no practical effect other than to make the person doing it feel satisfaction. The acts tend to require minimal personal effort from slactivist (Davis, 2011). Slactivist activities refer to internet petitions, joining a community organization without contributing to the

organization's efforts, copying and pasting social network statuses or messages or changing one's personal data or avatar on social network services in accordance with the event that one is protesting about. Further, Micah White introduced the term "clicktivism" in 2010 and he defines clicktivism as "the pollution of activism with the logic of consumerism". According to White,

clicktivists dilute their messages for mass appeal and make calls to action that are easy, insignificant and impotent. Their sole campaign objective is to inflate participation percentages, not to overthrow the status quo. In the end, social change is marketed like a brand of toilet paper [...] Clicktivism reinforces the fear of standing out from the crowd and taking a strong position. It discourages calling for drastic action. And as such, clicktivism will never breed social revolution.

Apart from these two mode of activism, Krapp (2005) refers to hactivism as the use of computers and computer networks to promote political ends, especially free speech, human rights and information ethics and tactical media is pictured by (Nayar 2010, Garcia & Lovink 1997, Boler 2008) as a form of media activism giving priority to temporary, hit-and-run interventions in the media sphere over the creation of permanent and alternative media outlets. On the other hand, Stefan Wray defines computer activism as "the use of the Internet infrastructure as a means for activists to communicate with one other, across international borders or not," and he affirms "electronic civil disobedience as a form of mass decentered electronic direct action, utilizes *virtual blockades* and *virtual sit-ins*. Unlike the participating in a traditional civil disobedience action, an ECD actor can participate in virtual blockades and sit-ins from home, from work, from the university, or from other points of access to the Net." Before analyzing Ötekilerin Postası as an example of an alternative media within social media and its potential for online political activism, it is necessary to touch upon the significant components of the Turkish political history in order to provide better a more comprehensive and detailed analysis.

4.4. Significant Components of the Turkish Political History

4.4.1. Turkish Modernization Process

Following the principles of modernity introduced in the chapter 1, modernization can be described as the whole process itself. In the words of Habermas:

The concept of modernization refers to a bundle of processes that are cumulative and mutually reinforcing; to the formation of capital and the mobilization of resources; to the development of the forces of production and the increase in the productivity of labour; to the establishment of centralized political power and the formation of national identities; to the proliferation of rights of political participation, of urban forms of life, and of formal schooling; to the secularization of values and norms; and so on. (1990: 2)

Although Turkey -then the Ottoman Empire- was undergoing remarkable transformations at social, political and cultural levels since the Tanzimat (Reformation) period, as an elitist, state-led, powerful and subversive social transformation process, Turkish modernization has mainly addressed the construction of a nation-state, its institutions, and particular rational, secular and modern identity both in national and individual level.

Turkish modernization is a quite crucial example of a modernization process taking place in a non-Western context and a political will to “Westernize”. “The terms ‘Westernization’ and ‘Europeanization’, which were widely used by nineteenth – and twentieth century reformers, overtly express the willing participation that underlines the borrowing of institutions, ideas, and manners from the West” (Göle 1997: 83). Even though the history of Turkish modernization might be regarded as a voluntary cultural change, in actual case, the Kemalist elites, intelligentsia and bourgeois class were the major actors throughout the whole process. In line with the implicit link between civilization and Westernization, tradition and barbarism coming from the

historical superiority of the West as the producer of modernity, throughout the modernization process, tradition is regarded as the main obstacle for progress.

Turkish modernization processes can be successfully analysed in terms of its perception of tradition and Westernization. Although modernity has a very close relationship with tradition, political modernity employs a very strict and different approach towards tradition. “Political modernity launches fort by disregarding the traditional in order to both legitimize and empower itself” (Kahraman 2002: 31). For this purpose, formation of a new public memory functioned as the means of both breaking ties with tradition and overcoming it.

In Turkey, the structure and meaning of tradition has opened to discussion and change by the foundation of the Turkish Republic. In Lale Devri (the Tulip Age) and Tanzimat (Reformation), Turkey did not face such a problem due to lack of such an epistemic break. Since the republican system is based on Western rationalism and Western modernity, Turkey has tended to disregard the value and importance of tradition. Through modernization process, since Turkey has not possessed the Enlightenment values, its material conditions and its critical thinking, it has experienced quite hard times. Therefore, in order to implement these values and norms, “Turkish society was obliged to develop a new language, a new form of perception and consciousness in line with the new preferences” (Kahraman 2002: 42). In addition to these new perspectives, a new form of identity has been offered by the Kemalist elites to replace the comparatively traditional form with rational and secular modern identity. The Republican, Kemalist ideology favoured a historical, epistemological break despite its being progressive. It is a national, state-centric and top-down bourgeois revolution. Kahraman indicates:

Since there were not any objective and subjective powers in terms of class who would carry the revolution, the movement was gradually centralized, bureaucratized and it was tried to be determined by top-down decisions. The revolution, in semi-authoritarian, authoritarian and hierarchical structure, worked for breaking all ties with the past in order to impose its reality upon the society. For this reason, the Republican administration also aimed at “describing and determining” culture as one of the ways and possibilities of society to define itself. (2002: 45)

Having quite peculiar structure, Turkish modernity reveals highly distinctive characteristics in achieving the ideals of European political modernity such as universal citizenship, equality before law, state/civil society distinction. Although the terms of Europe have been significant in the constitution of global political life, political practices taking place outside of Europe are emerged as well by the seeds of other traditions bringing the formation of alternative modernities. The particular experience of Turkish modernity has been the consequence of a challenge which claims that Islam can coexist with secular modernity and democracy in contrast to Western, European democracy. However, such coexistence has been invested with an inevitable problem, namely democratic consolidation. Even though “the history of modern Turkey can be described by the simultaneous existence of ‘success and failure’, that is, the success in establishing a necessary institutional structure of modernity, such as a nation state, modern positive law, parliamentary democracy, market economy, and citizenship, but at the same time, the failure in making modernity multi-cultural, democracy consolidated, economy stable and sustainable, and citizenship operating on the basis of the language of rights and freedoms” (Keyman 2007: xvi). The “success and failure” of the state-centric and secular model of Turkish modernity and democracy as a project of political modernity lies in the tension between societal and cultural modernization analysed in Gerard Delanty’s important book, *Social Theory in A Changing World*.

During the substantial restructuring that Turkish society is exposed to, universal validity of Western modernity and rationality was followed and, the main aim was to reach the Western level of civilization by both establishing necessary political, economical and cultural institutions. The creation of an independent nation-state, rapid industrialization and formation of a secular, modern and national identity remained as the major objectives of the Kemalist elites. The state as an extension of the Kemalist elites considered modernization not just as a problem of technological advancement but also as a set of cultural practices meaning that societal modernization should had to be supplemented by a cultural modernization constructing a discursive foundation for a modern, secular national identity. In light of this picture, Turkish modernity might be regarded as authoritarian modernity (Atabaki and Zurcher 2004).

For achieving a top-down, rapid modernization of new republic and constructing a modern, secular national identity, the state implemented a set of reforms such as republicanism, nationalism, etatism, secularism, populism and reformism. As Keyman points out:

These reforms defined the nation state as the sovereign subject of modernity, operating as the dominant actor of political, economic, and cultural life spheres, and aimed to construct national identity as an organic unity of the secular non-class based identity which necessarily involved the subjugation of its Other, i.e. the Kurdish identity, Islamic identity and minorities. This identity was the citizen as the symbol of secularism and civilization, virtuous enough to privilege state interest over his/her own interest, and the other was expected to accord primacy over difference. (Kahraman 2007: xxi)

The form of modernization at issue here revealed itself merely as societal modernization through state-led reforms and objectives barely touching the lives of Turkish people. As Mardin states, the missing part was the construction of “social ethos” in societal relations. Put differently, the success in the societal modernization

and the failure in cultural modernization remained as the two sides of the same coin. In the realm of cultural modernization, having the desire for rapid and fast modernization and the introduction and dissemination of Western Reason, the Kemalist elites and Atatürk himself considered the Islamic basis of the nation as an obstacle to progress and development. The state as an overarching modernizer has aimed at completely eradicating the seeds of tradition, Islamic knowledge as a form of reference, non-Muslim ethnic and religious minorities. In Keyman's words:

The remaining strong symbolic role of Islam in the identity formation of the identity-formation of the majority of people living in especially rural areas, as well as in the formation of everyday life in the republican era, and also the resistance, coming especially from the Southern Anatolia and voicing the demands of the Kurdish ethnic identity, against the conceptualization of national identity as a modern and secular organic unity can clearly illustrate and indicates that the problem of social ethos embedded in the Kemalist elite's will to civilization through social modernization (2007: xxi).

With the lack of democratic and free public sphere, powerful and social ethos in state-centric social modernization, Turkey has experienced modernization without democratic consolidation giving way to identity-based politics mainly in the form of Islamic resurgence and the Kurdish question since 1990s.

4.4.2. Political Culture, the Structure of Civil Society and Public Sphere in Turkey

As a country with a 'short' history of 'modernization', Turkey for many reasons is a significant example of a country in which politics and culture clash. The main reason for this is not that politics has always been intent on dominating the cultural field, but rather it is the fact that culture developed out of the structure and peculiarities of politics in the modernization process. In other words, the political culture in Turkey depends to a large extent on the twists of modernization (Kahraman 2007: 49).

Turkish modernity in the era of the Young Ottomans embodied the basic ideals of the French Enlightenment and favoured the attachment of reason. The basic characteristics of this era of early modernization can be listed as the desire for

formation of a new society, formation of a new way of doing politics based on rights and secular framework, and emergence of the intellectual class as a challenging authority for both society and state. Following the positivism as a policy-making instrument, Young Ottomans intended achieving rationalization of all social relations shaped by positive politics (Kahraman 2007:49). In this period, with the inspirations of Comte's understanding, intellectuals were regarded as scientist and they had knowledge and power to transform the masses since masses were incapable of developing themselves. In this regard, Kemalism, with its positivist features, can be seen as a continuity of the Young Ottomans' understanding. Kemalism, with its dual character as being both rupture and continuity in history of modernity in Turkey, is a "cultural ideology disguised in politics" (2007:55).

The Kemalist period can be regarded as a complete rupture from the early modernization period due to the introduction of the new notion of citizenship. The implementation of the Civil Code as a turning point functions as a medium through which the subjects and the state meet towards contractualism. With the Civil Code, the citizen is defined as a social entity having rights and freedoms. In contrary to "natural rights" embodied by the Islamic rationale, Kemalism offered a new conception of "rights" existing for the good of the citizen. Having a secular understanding of citizenship, Kemalism believed that the citizen should break ties with the principles or frameworks, in this case Islam and tradition, in order to enjoy the rights given to him/her as an enlightened individual.

However, even though Kemalism embraced such idealistic, democratic and liberatory principles, it has experienced some major problems in terms of secularism and construction of civil rights in the context of citizenship. Moreover, even though

it does not pursue such an intention, Kemalism, in a way, paved the way for creating a transcendental state and place the citizens as its obeying subjects.

As being the most debated issue today in Turkey, secularism has become the subject of hot debates especially in the post-1980 period starting from veiling/headscarf issue to rise of political Islam. Kemalism as an official ideology limited sacred to private space and by the state control, some sects and religious groups such as Alevi were completely ignored. In the issue of citizenship, on the other hand, Kemalism has not been able to reach its mission in creating citizen devoid of its chains. On the contrary, since Kemalism did not succeed to minimize the control and power of state on formation of citizenry and actually embodied the principle of statism, the desired form of enlightened and emancipated citizenry has not been constructed. Especially with Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (the Republican People's Party), Turkish citizens are regarded as a unified whole without having competing interests (Baban 2007: 75-99).

Cultural and political atmosphere giving way to an authoritarian governance in Turkey has been reinforced by a strictly structured public sphere. Although it is defined by Habermas as a modern phenomenon having the elements giving priority to the individual, rational and critical thinking, plurality, democratic political participation and clear-cut separation between private and public spheres, in Turkish case, public sphere has functioned both as the site of modernity and as the site of nation-building project under the supervision of the state. During the whole period, the state remained as a hegemonic agent since it is believed that cohesive social order could only be maintained through constructing homogeneous and unified national modern citizenry. Being restrictive and disciplinary, the public sphere in Turkey, according to Baban (2007: 76), has revealed three characteristics: "i) the public sphere in the new Republic was the strategic site in which political participation was

limited to the realization of the Republican elite's interpretation of modernity, ii) the hegemonic representation of national identity seriously curtailed the recognition and representation of other identities in the public sphere and finally, iii) the state as the autonomous subject of the public sphere" (Baban 2007: 75-99). The role of state as the sole enforcer of modernity did not leave any space for deliberation, critical reasoning which should have been emanated from free, rational and modern citizenry. Put it differently, the public sphere under the hegemony of national discourse functioned as an extension of complete state activity devoid of its foundations.

Although in the post-Kemalist era (1950-1980), starting with Demokrat Parti (the Democrat Party), Turkey has witnessed different forms of politics in line with global trends and transformations in both economical, cultural and political levels, Kemalism as a founder official ideology of the Turkish Republic has preserved its vitality and Kemalism has been used as the basic ideological instrument in all social movements in the history of Turkish politics.

The 1980 military coup is generally regarded as a significant break and as a turning point in Turkish politics. With the 1980 military coup, a new constitution was prepared which "clearly separated politics from society and bequeathed society as once again the domain of the state; the goal of the constitution was to restore the basic political culture that is *politics excluding the society*" (Kahraman 2007: 55). In response to the intended political culture, nearly the previous last two decades has been the times that Turkey has dealt with the demands of Kurds for cultural recognition and alternative perspective of modernity supported by Islamist groups. Due to major transformations in social and political structure in the last twenty years, Turkish public sphere and its aim of reaching further democratization has been

subjected to a process of reconstruction. In this process, the changing role of civil society, in a way, has weakened state-centric politics experienced since the Republican era in Turkey.

Although the current form of transformation of civil society in Turkey has been closely associated with the priority given by the European Union to the notion of civil society in the process of Turkey's accession to the Union, its history and vitality goes back to 1980s in Turkey. The cry-word "civil society" became the magical concept of the 1990s and 2000s (Keyman and İçduygu 2003). Although this concept started in the 1980s, it evolved in the following decades mainly due to the impact of the way of globalization (Keyman 2002). Despite many definitions and understandings regarding the concept, civil society is defined by Sarıbay (2009: 647) as "an organized social construction which is voluntary, self-formed, autonomous from state and functions as a mediator between private sphere and state. This structure is based on a institutionalized foundation which is the guarantee of freedoms and autonomies such as legal order and a series of common rules. Thus, it carries the power which both restricts and legitimizes state power as long as it depends on the law." Civil society fosters difference and plurality and civil society, any group does not have a right and claim to determine the interests of others and represent them. In this way, each social group finds a chance to express itself without feeling the hegemony of others.

The popularity, which the concept "civil society" gained in Turkey was in line with the global trend, appeared in 1980s resulting from neo-liberalism and globalization, and its reflections on policies regarding economic and political liberalism. Since within the framework of neo-liberalism, state has a limited power and authority, it fostered and opened a space for civil society as a sphere giving way to civic

engagement and participation. Apart from this global neo-liberal current reinforcing both power and scope of civil society, Turkey has had some distinctive political characteristics and conditions resulting a quite different perception and practices of civil society.

In line with the renewal of civil society, political culture in Turkey, after 1980, has substantially transformed. According to Göle (2009), changes in political culture can be handled in three levels. Firstly, political discourse has changed distinguishably. Secondly, the quality of relationships between social actors and state, and its political mediation have been transformed. Lastly, the question dealing with that to what extent the changing relationship between society and state expressed and shaped by political parties has gained significance. Moreover, political culture, after 1980s, has been supplemented with an powerful public opinion on the issues of environment, women movement, individual freedoms. All these transformations are reinforced by softening of political discourse and rise of consensual perspective.

Onbaşı indicates, in her book *Sivil Toplum*, that Turkey has mainly four peculiarities since 1980s in terms of the issue of civil society. The first in the list refers to the military coup occurred in 1980 revealing acknowledged power of the state inherited from the Ottoman-Turkish political structure against the Turkish society. This military intervention brought about the need for a vital and strong society against the state, namely formation of dynamic civil society. Further, the resurgence of Islamic groups and Kurdish nationalism has also been the reason for emergence of powerful civil society in Turkey. As Onbaşı remarks (2005:66), “rise of these groups is usually interpreted as a challenge to formal ideology and the definition of citizenship defined in this paradigm, and therefore, it is accepted as significant developments

accelerating the discussions on how the relationship between state-civil society will be formulated”. Keyman and Öniş (2007:282) also state that “The resurgence of Islam as a strong political, economic and cultural actor criticized the secular foundation of the strong-state tradition. The Kurdish question, articulated both as a language of ethnic difference and a form of ethnic violence has challenged the organic vision of society and its assumption of the unity between the state and nation.” In addition to identity politics performed by Islamic and Kurdish groups, 1980s has also witnessed women’s movement as a political movement struggling for sexual freedom and problematizing the issues such as sexual harassment, rape and violence against women. As the last peculiarity, Onbaşı points to the fact that Turkey has been under the influence of the negotiations for full membership to the European Union since 1990s and the whole process has positively altered the perception regarding the role and significance of civil society as “ during this integration process, non-governmental organizations or movements in Turkey collaborate with the organizations and movements having similar concerns in the world and receive support from them ”(Onbaşı 2005: 67).

As mentioned earlier, despite the transition to democracy in 1950s, Turkey has not achieved to bring and sustain democratic consolidation. From this perspective, the history of Turkish politics can be studied in terms of the simultaneous existence of democracy and the need to consolidate and deepen democratic transition throughout its state-society relations (Özbudun 1999). In the words of İçduygu (2007:181), “developments such as the restoration of democracy after the 1980 military intervention, the making of 1982 constitution, and the economic liberalization of 1980s and 1990s internally, and the end of the Cold War, the emergence of “New World Order”, and the rise of the European Integration internationally, all have

paved the way for a newly forming scenes in Turkey”. In light of these changes, civil society organizations have had a remarkable contribution to reinforcement of civil society and deepening of democracy in society.

Voicing the identity claims of Islamic groups, Kurds and other excluded and subaltern groups, civil society organizations in Turkey, have at least challenged hegemonic, state-centered formation of modern and organic Turkish identity. By using several media other than the mainstream ones in order to bring solidarity, raise awareness and reach general public from at first hand and disseminate vital messages regarding their concerns and problems, today many civil society organizations appeal to social media as a form of alternative media. Thus, through their existence in social media, CSOs pass over the problems of citizen involvement and allocation of resources which they suffer from in real space. Together with opportunities of new technologies of computer-mediated communication, today the role of civil society in providing a public space in which diverse social values and interests collide and interact have paved the way for emergence of a more vital, heterogeneous, plural and multidimensional public sphere in Turkey.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TURKEY

5.1. Turkey's Social Media Profile and Facebook as a Social Network Site

Since there are many social media sites differing in terms of their concepts, demography of followers and facilities it provides, it is more appropriate to state that there are plurality of social media catalogue rather than an organic structure. Although Turkey has been among the highest countries in Facebook and Twitter use, other forms of social media such as hypertext 'dictionaries' (Ekşi Sözlük, İnci Sözlük etc.), online news forums and the websites of newspapers are also included in Turkey's social media profile.

Facebook as a social network site has become a very common public place for people through which they can express several aspects of their social identity such as musical taste, environmental and political concerns in cyberspace. The website launched in 2004 and as of March 2013, Facebook has more than 1.15 billion active users in the world and as of February 2013, Turkey, with 32 260 920 users, ranked 7th country in the world. Facebook defines its nature as "a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. Facebook's

mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.” Users may create a personal profile, add others as friends, chat through instant messaging, share information, links, pictures and videos and join public discussions. Moreover, users may join common interest groups formed according to workplace, school, college or others characteristics. Networked publics formed in Facebook use the unique technological affordances the website and perform expressive information sharing and social interaction. Besides its risk for deepening political passivity, with all these characteristics, Facebook carries the potential for more informal politics and expressive form of political participation exemplified intensionally in 2008 U.S. elections and Gezi Park Protests in 2013 apart from political involvement in everyday issues.

Since the foundation of Facebook, there have generated a great number of social network sites created on different concepts. However, only Twitter has succeeded to challenge and undermine the dominance of Facebook in social media due to its emphasis on instantaneity, mobility, relative simpleness compared to Facebook (Irak and Yazıcıoğlu 2012). Although the discussions on social media opposition in Turkey revolve around Twitter, Twitter is invested with various problems due to its peculiar structure giving way to a limited political participation. As Irak and Yazıcıoğlu (2012:32-33) notes:

Twitter is a medium in which, borrowing the concepts of Habermas, there is no separation between private sphere-public sphere-political sphere...When this medium is used in a sheer way, everything written in private sphere transmitted to public sphere, therefore, political sphere. Yet we know, Turkey is a country where private sphere has not been politicized and its politicization has not been highly approved....Twitter do not still represent the whole social groups. It is a space in which since political sphere and private sphere is intermingled, people are timid; in the front of a mass who do not have a habit of political expression, the currents of retweeting have a potential to manipulate the discourse ruling out the feature of instantaneity; and the more popular people (such as celebrities) have a power to determine the agenda and discourse.

On the other hand, Facebook has a potential for such a separation between the aforementioned spheres through various interest groups and pages, and therefore, it gives the possibility to its users for political participation and expression without feeling any level of social pressure. Moreover, “since these pages usually belong to particular celebrities, political parties, institutions and media organs, they bring together users having specific particular political opinions. This enables making political sharing more easy and implicit. Moreover, it transcends the barriers between politics and Turkish people. This freedom that is nonexistent in other fields of life often radicalizes the discourse” (Irak and Yazıcıoğlu 2012: 32-33). Therefore, Facebook, having a more heterogeneous and plural user profile, provides a more open space for political discussion and a safer and closed form of political organization.

In light of these characteristics of Facebook and bearing in mind that the analysis of an alternative media necessitates a multi-theoretical perspective, I will provide a critical discourse analysis of a group called “Ötekilerin Postası” (The Others’ Post) as a case for alternative media in Facebook as a virtual public sphere and its implication for deepening of democracy in Turkey.

5.2. A Radical Instance of Alternative Media in Turkey: Ötekilerin Postası

Alternative ways of producing, consuming and sharing information have been one of the chief topics of discussion in Turkey, especially after widespread use of the Internet, the latest developments in new information and communication technologies, and rise of social media enabling a channel of expression and representation for ordinary citizens by transcending standardization and monopolization of information performed by mainstream media. In Turkey, various

scholars (Alankuş 2007, Kejanlıoğlu et al. 2012, Taylan 2012) have mostly studied the concept of alternative media through the case of The Independent Communication Network (ICN or BIA in Turkish) and the web site “Sendika.org:: We Are The Producers, We Will Be The Rulers!” working as a “news agency” as an instance for alternative communication (Özdemir (n.d.)). Moreover, the attitude of state-owned media and private commercial media in picturing and (non) reporting the news about Gezi Park Protests has elevated the level of attention directed to function and necessity of alternative media. While these studies have underlined emancipatory potential of new communication technologies through which citizens have a chance to break free from the chains of the way traditional mass media works by participation and expression, they do not shed light on a landscape which such a potential is more vitally realized, namely social media. With its extensive technological affordances and by its principle of existence, social media, particularly Facebook, is a virtual space open for different conceptions of alternative media. The potential at issue here is realized by a group in Facebook called Ötekilerin Postası functioning as a collaborative news network inviting active participation of its followers. Via the group, the citizens otherised throughout Turkish modernization process and by AKP government have risen their voice, and express and represent themselves following the principles of heterogeneity, plurality and difference in the styles, contributions and perspectives.

As Emrah Uçar, the co-founder of Ötekilerin Postası, defines:

Ö.P. follows a broadcasting policy which bring the people who have been otherised, ignored, preferred not be heard by the system and status quo understanding, adopt making news about their situation as a principle and in line with this principle, opposes Turkism, sexist understandings, hate speech, racism, homofobism and transfobism. Voluntary correspondents also make the broadcasting. We are trying to break the censorship.

In addition to this definition, the group notes that “Ötekilerin Postası utilizes its stance regarding citizen journalism, digital activism and civil disobedience as a alternative news source since 21.10.2012”. As a collaborative news network, Ötekilerin Postası was founded on 21 October 2012 in the name of 'Açlık Grevi Postası' (Hunger Strike Post) as a counter-stance to the language of representation presented by mainstream media while informing people about the hunger strikes happened in that year and during the resistance, it had a mission to share health conditions of the protestors in social media and inform people about protests and campaigns in online life. After the strikes ended, the group received considerable support to continue broadcasting and was renamed as Ötekilerin Postası. Their journey started on Facebook, expanded to Twitter and finally they opened a website. However, this study will only focus on their activities in Facebook.

Ötekilerin Postası as a collaborative news network embodies a counter-culture defined as “a semi-organized culture which examines and challenges many political and non-political features of the dominant culture” (Kirby 1971: 204). The members of a counter-culture usually share various norms and values conflicting with the ones in the dominant culture. Hence, “there is a sense of ‘we-ness’, not a loneliness or a sense of social isolation” through the experience of counter-culture.

Although the group does not have a central objective other than opening up a space for self-representation and expression of otherised people both through modernization process and the period ruled by AKP government, the Kurdish movement is included almost all topics of discussion. In line with the remark by Keyman and Öniş (2007:293) that “the Kurdish question has placed ethnicity at the center of Turkish politics in a very effective way that has put its print in almost every aspect of domestic and foreign policies of the Turkish state in the 1990s”, virtual

politics performed in the group cannot break ties with the struggle of Kurdish identity. Despite such a concentration, as will be observed in the following section, each topics of discussion reveals a unique case for analysis, and therefore, they should be handled accordingly.

The photograph below is situated in the opening page of Ötekilerin Postası and it is composed of various scenes from social movements and struggles signifying the spirit and the objective of the group. As being the voice of the others, the group promotes constant and powerful struggles in diverse fields of life. Although such a photograph has been criticized by some portion of followers since it pictures scenes which include violence, a vast number of users like the photograph and commented on it accordingly. One of the users affirmed that “I think, there couldn’t be a more beautiful picture to explain a struggle”. Moreover, in response to the claimed association between the photograph and terror by mainly nationalists, a user points out that “Terror, in Turkish, means attacking here and there without any purpose. In all these frames, there is a cause which is either they want to protest massacres or the events which do not be allowed such as May 1. That is to say, none of them is unpurposeful and against people. Attacks against people are the attacks, which your state makes to this people”.



Figure 2: “Resistance is in our souls. Raise the struggle!”

As it will be seen in many cases in the following sections, the group is composed of various social segments of society differing in political, ethnic, religious and cultural aspects. Therefore, almost all issues introduced in and discussed by the group are handled by quiet pluralist and multi-directional perspectives even though we observe that there mainly appear two dominant parties following conservative and nationalist approaches, on the one hand, and more leftist, social democratic and in some cases Kemalist approach on the other giving way to strong opposition and polarization between users and leading various forms of accusations referring both the history and modernization process of the Turkish Republic and the current AKP government. Such an identification stands the core principle of the group and appears in the comments regarding many issues except the ones dealing with environment, animal rights, violence against women and women rights, socialism and anti-capitalist movements.

Apart from this opening photograph, the group uses the picture of a pomegranate as a symbol. Pomegranate is generally referred as a symbol of plurality, prosperity and abundance and since it contains enormous number of seeds signifying multiplicity,

this symbol has been invested with various meanings in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Ancient Greece, art and literature, and mythology. Since the group can be regarded as a political community and an alternative medium composed of various different and conflicting social segments of society including ethnicity, religion and political perspective named themselves as the others, the symbol of pomegranate perfectly suits the structure and nature of Ötekilerin Postası.

5.2.1. The Call for Citizen Journalism

Ötekilerin Postası fosters the practices of citizen journalism described as “playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information” (Bowman and Willis 2003). As Jenkins (2003:157-170) points out, “Patterns of media consumption have been profoundly altered by a succession of new media technologies which enable average citizens to participate in the archiving, annotation, appropriation, transformation, and the re-circulation of media content.” Therefore, in line with the possibility for ordinary citizens to freely participate in various moments to production of media content and expression of their concerns, demands and problems through different formats and languages, the definitions of news and journalists have subjected to a necessary restructuring. Following this trend, in Ötekilerin Postası, followers who are not affiliated with journalism as an occupation participate in the content-production process by recording a video or taking a photograph from the place of the event or situation, which they are experiencing. Since citizen journalism is mostly seen on user-generated websites which are usually commercial, both the structure and objective of the group, and technological affordances of Facebook paves the way for active and dynamic citizen journalism. The enthusiasm for the group for promoting this kind of journalism can be seen in the below designs.



Figure 3: The Call for Citizen Journalism
“No media-We are all correspondents”



Figure 4: “Would you be our voluntary correspondent?”

5.2.2. Ötekilerin Postası and Facebook as “Faşistbook” (Fascistbook)

Facebook handled in this study as a public space has functioned as a platform through which Ötekilerin Postası has come into existence as an instance of an alternative media. Therefore, Facebook, in general terms, is defined as an open and liberal social network site utilized for different purposes by different social groups across the world. However, in the case of Ötekilerin Postası, Facebook has revealed a quite contradictory picture by applying its prohibitive practices and rules. In other words, although Facebook is the main foundation on which Ötekilerin Postası was established, it has been also Facebook, which the group has been the victim of continuous interference to both content and flow of information by prohibition due to complaints made to Facebook administration. Especially the news and photographs posted on the group related to Kurdish problem has been the main subject of the

mentioned interference. For instance, many photographs taken from the celebration of the newroz festival in Diyarbakır or Amed in Kurdish, a city located in the southeastern Turkey and regarded as the center of the Kurdish movement, displaced by Facebook from the profile of Ötekilerin Postası upon complaints. Therewith, the group stated that “The page is again under complaints. We are reposting the photos removed by Facebook. If the broadcasting stops, we will try to reconnect to the page. For your information”. This post was responded as “Was Facebook offended by this picture?” and “If they remove, we will repost” revealing perception of Facebook and commitment of followers. In this case and similar others, followers has repeatedly used the word “faşistbook” (fascistbook) in order to underline disciplinary character of Facebook and its practices under the site’s general rules and principle of security. The intense level of censorship exercised towards Ötekilerin Postası was protested by followers in various ways one of which refers to the below sticker stating that “Do not touch Others’s Post!” with a note of the administrator that “Our followers state that “do not touch” due to censors directed to Ötekilerin Postası”. This sticker was highly shared and liked by followers and one follower further commented as “Do not afraid of difference!”



Figure 5: “Do not touch Ötekilerin Postası!”



Figure 6: “Ötekilerin Postası is your voice, Protect your voice!”



Figure 7: “We have 75 thousand followers! Facebook closed our page, we did not keep silent.”

#ÖtekilerinPostasıcannotbesilenced

In response to these confining, otherising and exclusionary practices and implementation of Facebook, followers discovered various leaks of Facebook supervision and censorship, and invented some forms of tactics, resembling the conception, which Certau defines, giving way to freedom of expression. Certau differentiates two ways of operating in everyday life. While strategies are associated with the structures and institutions of power, which produce the dominant and hegemonic discourses or systems, tactics, are related more to individuals who act in these structures. Therefore, a tactic is defined by Certau (1984: 37) as:

A calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of atactic is the space for the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to *keep it itself*, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: it is a maneuver “withñ the enemy’s field of vision”, as von Bülow put it, and within enemy territory. ...It takes advantage of “opportunities” and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment.

The repertoire of tactics includes liking of the posts that seems likely to be complained about and displaced by Facebook, commenting on the post by inverse and vertical spelling and reposting the banned photographs and news after some time. All these forms of tactics have been performed by followers in corresponding to different possible threats giving way to tactical mobility. Tactics as the art of the weak (Certau 1984:37) have been functioned as a weapon of followers in fighting against the strategy of Facebook supervision. The post stating that “Dear followers, you can protect our page by liking. As you know, they try to ban the page due to constant complaints” is only an example for the call of Ötekilerin Postası’s administration against any possible practices of prohibition performed by Facebook supervision.

Besides the aforementioned practices of censorship exercised by Facebook, the site has also freezes and bans the account of Emrah Uçar, one of the administrators and co-founder of Ötekilerin Postası. Therefore, as he declared in the panel “Alternative Media” in 9th METU Sociology Days (March, 2013), he has in a constant escape from supervision and he has to open new accounts in order to maintain information flow. Further, Emrah Uçar pointed out that he has been under surveillance of the Turkish police force due to his involvement and commitment to Ötekilerin Postası.



Figure 8: “Any apparatus similar to firewall, phorm, echelon, and censorship cannot block a reasonable and questioning person to reach information. Censorship is a futile effort in the contemporary times in which a SMS reaches to the far end of the world in two shakes of a lamb's tail.”

The censorship practices exercised towards Ötekilerin Postası have also been criticized by Bilişim Çalışanları Dayanışma Ağı (Informatics Workers Solidarity Network) (BİÇDA) and the group shared the organization’s opinion by the above post with a statement that “These blockings of Facebook are totally arbitrary”. From the comments, it is reasonable to think that followers also do not find any plausible reason for any censorship practices performed by Facebook such that a follower

commented that “I agree with you. There are lots of malicious websites escaping supervision. However, the page having no such intentions is trying to remove the complaints. As if massacre links and commercials were not spams, the group’s shares and links are blocked even they are irrelevant but who cares?”.

5.2.3. General Rules of Ötekilerin Postası

Ötekilerin Postası as an alternative medium hosts quite diverse perspectives coming from different social segments of Turkish society in terms of ethnicity, religion, political view, sexual orientation and environmental concerns. Therefore, in order to maintain order and prevent conflicts, the group has actually one grand rule that it posted recurrently on every hot issue regarding defamation and swearing. For instance, in the discussion about the kissing protests made in various cities of Turkey and foreign countries by Turkish citizens as a response to warning made by state officials against kissing in public, the site posted a statement that “Warning: Followers making comments having swear and insult words will be blocked or they can unfollow the page before subjected to this practice. All critical comments are welcomed with respect”. As can be seen in this example and many others, the group welcomes all ideas and perspectives unless it violates the atmosphere for a healthy discussion and reasoning. Thus, Ötekilerin Postası tries to foster the equality and liberty at the same time in the most inclusive manner possible through an atmosphere in which mutual respect and tolerance remain as the key elements.

4.3. Various Topics Covered by Ötekilerin Postası

Ethnic and Religious Massacres

The site has also been the voice of people whose ethnic histories have experienced a disastrous event called genocide. The site has helped to publicize the event for the Circassian Genocide Memorial Day on 18 May 2013 in the Taksim, Istanbul. Moreover, in addition to the poster of the event and a photograph signifying the genocide, a news article was posted on the site giving historical informational about the genocide.



Figure 9: 1864

The article noted that “After the end of Caucasian-Russia wars, the people of North Caucasia were exiled in 21 May 1864 from their soils on which they had been living for thousands of years. Over a one million Caucasian people were exiled. The number of people who were directly killed by Russians is 500 thousand”. Moreover, the website www.may21.org designed for raising public awareness for the genocide calls for the grandchildren of the people who were massacred in 1864 to the protests. Regarding the genocide, a user shared a series of photographs about the Circassian

identity and history. Further, a user stated that “We condemn the genocide and assimilation done to Caucasian people”.



Figure 10: “We did not forget Corum. Fascism will drown in the blood that it shed!”

In addition to Circassian genocide, the group also touched upon important massacres targeted to Alevi people such as Çorum Massacre and Sivas Massacre. The group shared some posters and photographs from the memorial day events with a note that “After Çorum Massacre, two generations have been grown up but these kids remained as children. We did not forget, we will not let be forgotten”.

Conscientious Objection



Figure 11: Conscientious Objection

The right to conscientious objection has also been a subject among the repertoires of the issues handled by the site. The group gives place to the news about the foundation of Vicdani Ret Derneği (the Association of Conscientious Objection) on 15 May 2013, the World Conscientious Objection Day, the above photograph and the event related to it. In the news, it is reported that “They once more indicated that their aim is not only eradicate militarism which is contrary to human dignity in Turkey but they also in a universal anti-militarism struggle”. Further, the news informs the readers about the call of the co-chairman of the association to conscientious objectors for a more active struggle and conscientious objection is right of citizens who have not been recognized by the Turkish state.

Emancipatory Politics and Social Inequality

In addition to being a public space for identity politics and what Giddens defines as lifepolitics, Ötekilerin Postası has also included the problems and demands of workers from both manufacture and service sector, professionals and white-collar workers who are employed in precarious positions and unemployed people. Therefore, the site brings forwards the problems related to unequal distribution of wealth and income, social security, social inequality and the role and vitality of labour unions and organizations. The below picture was posted on the site in order to underline the number of people living conditions of people who suffer from social inequality in a less formal way.

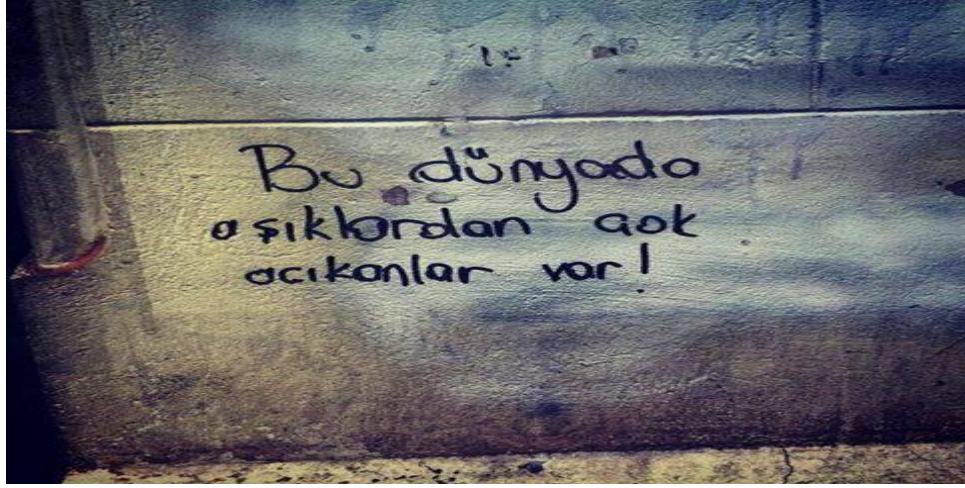


Figure 12: “The hungrier are more than the lovers in the world.”

Ötekilerin Postası has functioned as an alternative medium in a media atmosphere in which worker rights and demands have not been brought to agenda in public sphere and therefore, Turkish citizens have not been properly informed about the struggles and conflicts experienced between workers and employers. For instance, the struggles of workers employed in Türk Hava Yolları (Turkish Airlines) has been one of the topics which the site has become the close follower of and every step that the workers performed has been shared with the followers of the site in various forms such as press releases of Hava-İş Sendikası (Civil Aviation Workers Union) or photographs from the demonstrations. Further, the rights and problems of workers of various vocational branches from both manufacture and service sector such as nakış işçileri, nakliyat işçileri and metal işçileri has been voiced by the site through their particular unions. Moreover, the event targeted to workers, the unemployed, precarious workers organized by Umut-Sen shared in the site. Another struggle for rights targets the conditions of research assistants employed in universities under the position of 50/d which confined the period of employment and raise the level of elusiveness of future. Regarding the issue, the site shared the meeting poster and

tried to raise awareness of the precarious structuring of the academy. Although we witness some forms of precarious employment within academy itself, the academy support the causes of disadvantaged groups of workers such as the case in Koc University. After the university had dismissed a group of workers working in the servise sector from employment, workers, students and academicians started protesting at the entrance door the campus by pitching tents. These protests have resulted in remarkable consequences and the dismissed workers re-employed by the university. All the steps taken by the protestors and and their consequences have been shared by the site including the related news and the photographs from the field.



Figure 13: “End injustice directed to research assistances!”



Figure 14: “The poster of Workers’ Struggle Association regarding a workshop on work-related concepts and worker rights”

Besides picturing the efforts aiming at defending worker rights, the site also informs the citizens and especially workers about the events and formations organized in order to heighten their knowledge about their rights . The above picture posted on the site was about a workshop on the worker rights and it aims to introduce and clearly define various work related concepts such as flexible work, work time, overtime, annual leave. Moreover, the site has announced the news titled as “Çorlu Class Attitude Workers School is starting”. The news notices that in each week, a panel on work-related issues such as “The latest developments in struggle of rights, the conditions of labour unions and business law and new lwa on labour unions” will be organized and various specialists will give lectures to workers.

Environmental Concerns

Environmental awareness has been a common concern for many followers of the site and accordingly the site has functioned as a news bulletin board in publicizing various events and panels regarding preservation of environment such as the event named as “It is time to struggle for Belgrad forest” which aims to find solutions to the problems and threats that the forest faces. Moreover, the protests organized against the ecological depredation and intervention by local people from cities of different regions of Turkey has been brought into public by the site. For instance, the site shared the concert organized by Karadeniz İsyandadır Platformu (Black Sea is in Riot Platform) which is a local solidarity organization against ecological destruction that has been exercised in the Black Sea Region of Turkey. With the slogan “Dance high against ecological destruction” and their constant efforts to preserve their living spaces, the platform calls especially the local people of the region living in Istanbul to perform their local dance called “horon” with pride as a way for resistance. The platform declared in their press release that “We invite all our friends to meet in the Black Sea Rebellion and Solidarity Concert for dancing high against ecological destruction, rent projects, attacks on languages and cultures and commercialization of every life spaces and environment”.

The concerns for green has been supplemented by the protests against the hydroelectric power plants (HES) planned to be build in various cities of Turkey and the nuclear energy power plant which will be established in Mersin. The demonstrations against HES made in Boğazpınar village, Mersin and in Dersim, Tunceli has been voiced by the site. In the press release given by Boğazpınar HES Karşıtı Platformu (Boğazpınar Anti-Hydroelectric Power Plant Platfrom), it is stated the villagers was deceived in a similar project done in 2009 resulting in substantial

damages to both agriculture and husbandry. Therefore, the villagers demand cancellation of the project and they stated that “We will not let our water, village and future disappear”.



Figure 15: “We do not want a hydroelectric power plant in Bogazpınar!”

Apart from the protests against HES, Mersin Nükleer Karşıtı Platform (Mersin Anti Nuclear Energy Platform) activists have revealed their stance and raise public awareness about the issue by forming a human chain in the day of the third anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear accident. The news posted on the site reported that “The protestors carrying banners such as " Akkuyu will not be Fukushima", "We do not want nuclear power plant” and screaming constantly as "Imperialist capitalists, go away from Turkey", " We do not want nuclear power plant in Mersin", "Just spite to nuclear, life!" were supported by BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) Mersin Representative Ertuğrul Kürkçü, CHP (Republican People’s Party) Mersin Representative Vahap Seçer and Aytuğ Atıcı”. Further, according to the news, activists have concerns about the threats of nuclear power plant on the fields of health, environment, agriculture and tourism. Therefore, they stated that “We will not let Akkuyu be Fukushima”.

The Kurdish Question and Language

Throughout the nation-state building process, Turkey embodied the perspective that all nation should be united under an official language, that is Turkish. In other words, other non-Turkish languages have been used only in the private sphere even if a citizen is born into that language. Therefore, citizens belonging various ethnic identities and speaking non-Turkish languages had to have their education in Turkish and use that language in all state-related circumstances and nearly all circumstances of social life such as social interactions in everyday life, communication and media since Turkish language is accepted as a dominant and official language of a nation by the constitution. As it was expected, such a statement has brought about the practices of exclusion for a considerable portion of the Turkish citizens whose native languages are different from Turkish. As statistics reveal, by 2010, Kurdish is the second mostly used language in Turkey with 12,7% after Turkish. Therefore, a vast portion of Turkish citizens have suffered from this exclusionary perspective regarding language preference of the Turkish Republic.

Although, in line with the Kurdish initiative, the AKP government has taken several crucial steps regarding articulation and integration of the Kurdish language to the national public sphere and everyday life through major reforms in various state institutions, Kurdish people still sensitive about their native language and its prohibition for years. The major steps taken by the AKP government was directed to the fields of media, education and right to testify in native language. For instance, in 2009, the state-owned television channel, TRT (Turkish Radio Television Institution, launched a new TV channel, TRT 6 or TRT Şeş in Kurdish, broadcasting in Kurdish. It is stated that “it aims to carry Turkey’s rich and colorful culture to the white screen”. Moreover, school children can learn Kurdish as an elective language

and non-Turkish citizens have the right to defend themselves in their native languages during judicial process. Although these efforts can be defined as great reforms, especially Kurdish people seems to have not forgotten the history of exclusionary practices targeted to their native language, and accordingly, they have not break ties with the type of discourse that refers to the Kurdish identity as unique. The below photograph was shared on the site in 26 May 2013 when the AKP government has proceeded far enough in the resolution process and it still reminds the pain and exclusion which the Kurdish people experienced since the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

Irak and Yazıcıoğlu (2012:128) support the view that the Kurdish movement embodies a different potential compared to other types of counter-social movements with regard to use of social media. This difference can be explained over two reasons. “First, the field in which the Kurdish movement can perform politics is too limited due to legal and social pressure that the movement has subjected to. In this respect, social media opens a relatively free channel for Kurdish users. Second, Kurdish users are living a more politicized life compared to Turkish ones.”



Figure 16: “Kurds look so nice because their language has been prohibited and all their feelings have been massed in their eyes.”

This photograph taken from *Min Dit (Before Your Eyes): The Children of Diyarbakır* which is a 2009 Kurdish drama film has been very popular in the site with 1,891 likes and 1,000 shares and people have mostly commented on the photo underlining the peculiarity of being a Kurd, their feelings towards Turkish language and characteristics attached to Kurdish identity resulting from the history. With regard to the language, a user stated that “I am Kurd and I do not know Kurdish. But when a person speaks in Kurdish next to me, I want to hug him/her. It is a weird thing” and another user remarked that “Everybody knows that Kurdish has been spoken in public and transmitted to succeeding generations under quite difficult conditions. Our Kurdish fellows should definitely be stick to their community and defend their organization, party, guerilla and leading staff”. Moreover, many people commented on this photograph and others in Kurdish. It should be pointed out that any issue regarding Kurdish people is invested with the discussion on the axis of Turkish nationalism and Kurdish political movement. Therefore, all comments in this

particular issue can be easily linked to “we and them” type of relation between users fostering polarization and separation. These discussions revolve around the concepts of “herd psychology”, revenge and hatred and even a user having nationalist motivations hotheadedly asserts that “Nobody did not restrict anybody in this country. If that was the case, you would not be go out let alone speak. I observe that you talk like a canary. Nobody can say anything to Turks”. Therefore, in line with the fundamental tendencies and political polarizations in Turkey, we see that any issue touching the Kurdish problem in any respect exacerbates the discussions among users without reaching a consensus on the issue. By defending their perspectives in line with their political identities as much the facilities of Facebook and the rules of the site determined by administration allows, users reveal a quite remarkable example of radical democracy.

Concerns for Historical and Cultural Heritage

The soil on which the Turkish Republic was founded on has hosted many cultures and civilizations in different periods of history. Since Turkey has been a home for considerable number of ethnic and religious communities, it has a rich potential for archaeology ruins and cultural diversity. Besides its focus on the political and cultural issues, Ötekilerin Postası also concerns about the cultural heritage residing in Turkish territory and the cultural heritage that it carries. Therefore, the city of Hasankeyf in Batman threatened by the Ilisu Hydroelectric Dam Project has also been included among the concerns of the site. It is estimated that more than 20 cultures has settled in the ancient city of Hasankeyf which “built on and around the banks of the river in southeastern Turkey, may be one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the world, spanning some 10,000 years. Hasankeyf and its surrounding limestone cliffs are home to thousands of human-made caves, 300

medieval monuments and a unique canyon ecosystem—all combining to create a beguiling open-air museum”.



Figure 17: The city of Hasankeyf

Although there have been widespread protests from local authorities, archaeologists, architects, preservationists and environmental groups regarding the suspension of the project, AKP government made a decision of expropriation regarding the city and sat around the table for the tender of the project with the foreign investors. The public awareness regarding the condition of Hasankeyf is so vital that people created a website called www.hasankeyfmatters.com and they desired to prevent the inundation of Hasankeyf by the floodwaters and to form a scheme for the conservation, preservation or relocation of the ancient city. Hasankeyf matters since the city is “a visually compelling open-air museum that engages the imagination in myriad ways, meeting 9 of 10 UNESCO criteria for inclusion on the World Heritage List.” and accordingly many people sign petitions to UNESCO World Heritage Committee to stop the project. In line with such a motivation, Ötekilerin Postası has posted a news regarding the condition of the city of Hasankeyf titled as “In Hasankeyf, Assyrian and Armenian culture is disappearing ” declaring that “Settled

on for 10 thousand years, the ancient city Hasankeyf has become a world mosaic in which different civilizations, cultures and beliefs live together. Lately threatened by rising water coming from Ilisu Dam, Hasankeyf is about to annihilate with all its existence". With this news, the site has revealed its concern for the issues of cultural heritage, archeological sites, ruins and history of Turkey; and this news has been shared in a considerable number of times by followers.

Reyhanlı Bombings

Reyhanlı bombings happened on 11 May 2013 in the town of Reyhanlı, Hatay and resulted in the death of 51 people and many others' injury. This terrorist attack having links with Syria has been a huge topic for discussion due to AKP government's attitude towards the Syrian civil war, support for Syrian refugees and its foreign policies and Ötekilerin Postası, similar to any other medium, has voiced and shared conflicting opinions, news and reactions related to the incident.

When the expected visit to Reyhanlı by the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was made after his meeting with the President of the United States Barack Obama, Turkish politics has to deal with the issues related to AKP government's strategy in Turkish foreign affairs and their reflections on internal affairs, security and welfare of Turkish society. As a reaction, people from different regions of Turkey made protests about the incident and AKP government's policy preference. Ötekilerin Postası posted the below photograph from a protest made by university students in Kütahya with a note that "University students in Kütahya marched for call AKP as the proxy of imperialism to account for Reyhanlı". The photograph and the note emphasize the word "imperialism" and regard AKP as the murderer of Reyhanlı and

the proxy of imperialism due to its stance in Syrian civil war and its close relations with the United States.



Figure 18: “AKP is the murderer of Reyhanlı and the proxy of imperialism”

In addition, the group also shared the news published in Yurt Newspaper with the photograph below. The news reports that “They try to calm down the Reyhanlı people by giving money!” and mentions about the difficulties the local people experience as a result of the attack and their demand for compensation. The news further states that “AKP government who was not seen in public when the people were in pain plan to appear after spending money and a bit softening the reaction of people”. This post received an adequate level of attention and two conflicting comments. While the one which seems to be critical about the government’s attitude commented as “You should also say that Yurt correspondents were detained and sent to prison on the grounds of being spies for Esad” and was liked by a reasonable number of people, the other being content with the government implementations stated as “The people of Reyhanlı both accepts the money and creates trouble”. Therefore, even in this tragic case, followers can have a chance to propound their conflicting opinions through the group.



Figure 19: A scene from the bombing

September 12 1980 Military Coup

Ötekilerin Postası as a form of an alternative media has constantly brought into light the practices of hegemony, repression, punishment in diverse forms directed to ranging segments and social groups in Turkish society in different historical moment of the history. One of these groups has been the victimized people during the September 12 1980 military coup participating in substantially hot social conflicts and taking a side between right and left political dualism against the danger of so-called “communism” and “anarchy”. The group carries the mission to visualize and publicize the pain and suffering of the people who were labeled as criminals by the state and jurisdiction due to their stance before and during the conflicts and uprisings. Therefore, the group periodically shares a serious of shocking original footages taken from the book “Kara Arşiv, 12 Eylül Cezaevleri (The Black Archive, 12 September Prisons)” by Ali Yılmaz.



Figure 20: A photograph from the book picturing a scene of the trial



Figure 21: A photograph from the book picturing practices of humiliation and psychological torture

Above photographs taken from the book and posted on the group reveal the practices of humiliation and psychological torture let alone physical punishment. In addition to these photographs, the group also gives to newspaper articles picturing the social and political conditions of the day. However, the particular concern of the group did not

seem to receive the expected attention from the followers such that very few people liked or shared the related news and photographs. Therefore, from this scene, it is possible to infer that even though military coups and political conflicts based on dualism such as nationalism and socialism are still the point of reference in the Turkish political realm, followers namely, the citizens of late-modern Turkey follow and practice a strand of politics beyond left and right and therefore, they deal with and problematize the issues other than the ones of central political leanings.

Fascism

With its founding principle favouring plurality, multiplicity, heterogeneity and difference, Ötekilerin Postası disregards any approaches leading to uniformity and standardization towards which it exists as a counter-organization and community composed of networked publics. Therefore, it criticizes any type of ideology based on “one” and “single” kind of unitary element, namely all key components of nation-state. In other words, with a quite plural demographic structure, the site aims at subverting the key constituents of nation-state. Such a motivation has been reinforced by the structural transformation happened in world politics in late – modern age especially due to intensification of globalization and decrescent role of nation-state. Moreover, today it is hard to identify a class-based politics exercised by people who are in conflict regarding relations of production and distribution of material resources. Rather, the citizens of the late-modern age are more occupied with the issues revolving around the concept of identity in various forms and the rights related to it. Thus, politics practiced around consolidative principles such as language, which turn a blind eye about difference, is conceived as fascistic. In line with this reasoning and structural profile of the site, the below picture was posted on the site and has received remarkable comments.



Figure 22: “Unitary State + Unitary Nation + Unitary Flag+ Unitary Language= Fascism”

“Any environment in which uniform opinion resides does not include tolerance.”

All users commented on the picture was in consensus that the type of politics based on the principles of a unitary state, nation, flag and language will result in fascism and a user even add an extra element to this equation called “single ruler”. Furthermore, another user perceives the people governed under this rule as “herd”. This picture is generally interpreted in terms of its link to contemporary political atmosphere in Turkey by the following statements that “The ones supporting this unitary perspective will stop where they stand like a chugging tractor” and “In other words, the combination of CHP, MHP and AKP though, in recent times, CHP does all by itself”. From these comments, it is possible to infer that followers the site do not carry the hope for any betterment or eradication of fascistic perspectives in Turkish politics since, according to them, even the main opposition party has been revealed some potential for fascistic motivations and perspective let alone AKP government. When it is the case, followers are very glad for remaining outside the

politics based on representative party systems. Therefore, one of the followers stated that “Fiasco! Unfortunately, the picture is in the minds of today’s people. Luckily, we are the others”.

Apart from the common understanding of fascism revolving around a singular and unifying principle binding a nation, the group also shared news about AKP government and its policy implementations regarding AKP government as the executor of “moderate fascism”. The news published in www.sendika.org declares that the attitude of AKP government and Turkish police force towards any critical segment of society such as students, academicians, teachers, political convicts protesting against the existing policies by extreme violence and brutality has showed that “The modest version of fascism performed by AKP is not that modest”. Therefore, it is evident that the group identifies and refuses any form of fascistic orientation and practice even though they do not embody nationalistic principles.

Women Movement

Ötekilerin Postası has foregrounded many issues related women movements and its philosophy. To begin with, maybe the most significant discourse followed by the movement has been underlined with the post left down stating that the problem lies in male-dominated system rather than testosterone hormone and wearing revealing clothes. Moreover, the post right down pictures the hegemony of patriarchal values over women’s body.



Figure 23: “The danger for women comes in from their closests!”



Figure 24: “The problem lies male-dominated system rather than testosterone hormone and wearing revealing clothes.”

This design titled as “the danger for women comes from their closests!” has responded by considerable number of comments some of which includes “Pressure of father, beating by brother and husband etc. commodification of women by the system... Women are the most oppressed segment of exploitative mentality of patriarchal society” and “Men perceive women body as a piece of meat, they regard effloresce of breasts of girls as immoral and they insult their sisters in public. There is nothing to be understood”. However, in opposition to the understanding reflected on the comments above, some followers stated that this design was inappropriate and “immoral” even if it tried to criticize the patriarchal system through symbolism. Further, some followers did not share the opinion that the design intended to raise such that there appeared various comments as “These efforts are futile. Everything

ends in mind. Women are gradually corrupted in the name of freedom and women degrade their value. Women are, first, daughters of fathers and mothers then, lovers and life partners for husbands. Apart from these conceptions, everybody sees women in a way that they wish to see, this does not bother women. This is the problem of the people” and “Share more appropriate things, you use women body as a commercial”.

The criticisms towards dominant discourse on women body have been reinforced by the incidents of violence against women and femicide. Regarding the topic, the group shared various posts picturing general perception and government’s attitude. The comics taken from Uykusuz was posted by the group signifying commonness of femicide such that the newspaper informs about a number of news reporting the murders of women in different places such as forest and the man states that “Turkish women are in social life...Our women are in everywhere, in every field”.



Figure 25: “Turkish women are in social life...Our women are in everywhere, in every field.”

The official statistics announced by the Ministry of Family and Social Security has also fostered the discussions on femicide and revealed the significance given to the

issue. The post supported by the below photograph was shared with a news reporting that according to the Ministry, there happened only 666 femicide cases in the last four years.



Figure 26: “In the first eight months of 2010, 200 women are murdered. The number of women killed in July is at least 36.”

However, as the photograph reveals, according to “We will stop femicide platform” the numbers are substantially higher than the official statistics. Only in the first half of 2010, 200 women were murdered and the number of women murdered in July at least 36.

Although all these posts generally were shared by the group through the supporters of women movement who, in line with the movements philosophy, disregard any discourse and normative framework such as religion determining women’s role and perception of women in the society, "KADINA ŞİDDETE KARŞI MÜSLÜMANLAR İNİSİYATİFİ (Muslims Opposing Violence Against Women Initiative)” has also shared a post composed of stickers designed to raise awareness about violence against women. The distinctive character that the stickers carry was that they mostly refer to religious elements such as “haram (forbidden by religion)”

and the statement of a prophet such as ““The prophet did not beat a woman” as the reason why violence against women should be eradicated.



Figure 27: The stickers designed by Muslims Opposing Violence Against Women Initiative to raise awareness about violence against women

While the concern of the platform might be regarded a considerable contribution to the movement, followers did not share this opinion since the platform takes religion as a reference point. Such that, they even stated that “How sweet! It is both sweet and insincere” and “I do not understand why they turned this issue into a religious ceremony. Why are you proud of it? Is this an extra trait?”. Further, followers realize that the stance of the platform conflicts with their religious doctrine and followingly they commented that “A women committee both accepting being a slave to men and refusing all these is nonsense. After all, Islam put women in a secondary position and its concrete examples are evident”.

March 8 International Women's Day

Discussions in Ötekilerin Postası on the women movement and the issues related to it intensified during the week of 8 March International Women's Day. The group shared various articles regarding women employment such as the one in Birgün newspaper calling for women working in their homes to be a member of labour unions. Further, it also publicized the event posters and photographs from the events one of which is situated below revealing the banner "We own our body, life and decisions! We have your family!".



Figure 28: "Against sexual, national class-based exploitation, let's meet in streets."



Figure 29: "We own our body, life and decisions! We have your family!"

Further, the photograph below shared in the group revealing various different kinds of words produced by patriarchal discourse used to signify women. The words such as 'bayan' (lady), 'karı' (wife) and 'kahpe' (prostitute) were frowned upon by protestors and the only appropriate word underlined as "woman". Although these

posts have been liked and shared by a great number of times, some of the followers did not share that enthusiasm. In line with this picture, some commented as “Now, everybody accepts feminine feeling such as Kurds and socialists. Everybody makes literature on women but rural women are still victims of violence. The emphasis given to women movement is meaningless, the reality is behind us” and “Are these really significant matters to discuss?”.



Figure 30: A banner revealing different words used to signify “woman”

Moreover, the group also shared a commemoration event held in Radyo Toplumsal (the Social Radio) with a quote of Lenin stating that “Without women, revolution is impossible. Without revolution, women cannot be freed”. A follower commented on the post as “The struggle for socialism, democracy and freedom cannot be successful without winning the women’s struggle for freedom”. Furthermore, in that week, followers of the group send their pictures in which a mostly used slogan voiced in celebration events about the women’s day called “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” in Kurdish (woman, life and freedom in English) was written on their hands to Ötekilerin Postası. This slogan was also written in various languages such as Turkish, English

and even Laz language. Men were also a significant part of this form of organization. Ötekilerin Postası also shared the men perspective about the day through an organization called “rahatsız erkekler (restless men)” made a statement to public declaring that “Not only in 8 March but in everyday, we should work in order to turn this division of labour and sexual discrimination into our side because men are not also free until women are emancipated”.

Kissing Protests

The protests were against the announcement made by a state official in Kurtulus subway station in Ankara in May 2013 stating that “Dear passengers, please behave properly in line with the moral rules” over a couple’s kissing in public. Ötekilerin Postası has shared many photographs by voluntary correspondents taken from the protests and event posters some of which are situated below. Right after the announcement, many kissing protests were organized in various cities such as Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir.





Figure 31: We are kissing at Kurtulus subway station.



Figure 32: "Protect your freedom!! Turkey is kissing!"

The posts have received great attention and liked, shared and commented an incredible number of times. The comments mainly revolved on two conflicting

perspectives. While the first perspective was closer to the conservative mentality revealed through the comments some of which are “Many people are dying, they do not know but they only protests these things. God will call them to account. Their tombs are waiting for them, they should not worry”, “In the past, people say both religious practices and sins are secret. In this case, the doomsday must be coming”, “Immorals”, “Immorality reaches knee length. Humanity is getting worse. Shame on you!) ” and “We have been plainly Westernized”, the remaining one celebrates both the way and topic of protests. “To the ones who say “when there is various problem in the country, hunger, poverty and unemployment reach to quite high levels, blood is flowing in the streets, sick inmates are not cured in prisons, you kiss in the subway”, we both kiss in the public and struggle against any kind of injustice. Does it bother you?”, “Nothing is immoral in this country except kissing. Why?” , “My advice to the ones who say kissing is immoral is that you should kiss a bit, you will be relieved and your hatred will be lessened” and “This protest is made to symbolize that everyone is free in this country and against the ones who intend to restrict this freedom, youth is alive, be afraid. (To the ones who get the message) ” are among the comments shared by followers from the latter leaning. Further, besides these two fractions and issue of morality, followers discussed mainly on fascist and socialist values, representation of women and women rights. Moreover, as a response to statements claiming that such level of participation and awareness did not channel to other social events such as Reyhanlı Bombings and Uludere Massacre, followers tried to justify their concerns for the mentioned incidents.

These kissing protests named as “Do not afraid kissing” have also happened in foreign countries in which Turkish citizens live such as Belgium. The below

photograph shared with Ötekilerin Postası pictures Turkish citizens' participation to the protests through social media.



Figure 33: “Curse on your morality!”

Last but not the least, Ötekilerin Postası has also shared a Twitter post of one of the most famous journalist and columnist in Turkey, Cüneyt Özdemir, stating that “When a man kills a women in the middle of a street, it is called as “honour murder” and when a man kisses a woman in public, it is called “immorality” Is that right?” and “If one’s kissing his/her lover in street, subway station and train wagon is regarded as “immoral”, call me “immoral” too”.

The Death of Hugo Chavez

The death of the president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, in March 2013 has been a significant topic of discussion on the group revealing and reviving its socialist perspective. Ötekilerin Postası has spent a great amount of space to the news related to the death and its reflections on Turkish society. For instance, an article by Stefo Benlisoy with the title “The Inheritance Left by Chavez” was shared on the group

and follower commented in response to it as “Hugo Chavez, the revolution and comrades will not forget you” and “You are again next to Che”.



The above photograph taken from the funeral in Venezuela and shared in the group with the note that “Venezuela is on the streets for socialism! While giving Chavez a funeral!”. This post attracted enormous attention with over 1.300 likes and 600 shares. The comments about the post mainly revolved around the social reforms implemented by Chavez for the general interest of the Venezuelan people and most of the followers envied those people both in terms of social equality, social assistance and other aspects of social life such freedom of conscience and expression. As the comment indicates, “The one of the things that I should add is that there is no criminal of thought and political criminals in Venezuelan prisons. Even though in almost everyday there are anti-Chavez protests, police do not arrest anybody, harass people with tear gas and batons. Only criminals sentenced for simple offences are put in prisons”.

Apart from many posts explaining the role of Hugo Chavez for the history of Venezuela, Ötekilerin Postası also shared an event poster below titled as “We are meeting for Comrade Chavez” which made way to a quite vibrant discussion.



Figure 34: “We are meeting for Comrade Chavez!”

In response to the press release of the event showing the respect for Chavez for his struggle for capitalist and imperialist system and stating that “His struggle is our struggle”, there appeared a discussion about socialism and its neglect of Kurdish problem. Some comments tried to prove the assumed hidden plan and dishonesty of Chavez and responded by the followers who embrace a socialist perspective. In line such a motivation, one shared a quote of Chavez as “We will not rest until breaking all chains digesting our people and chains of hunger, poverty and colonialism. Either this country will be a free country or we will die while trying to free it” in order to reinforce his argument.

While there happened such discussion on the relationship between policies of Chavez, socialism and Kurdish problem, Ötekilerin Postası shared the news about the BDP’s (Peace and Democracy Party) condolence message regarding the death of

Chavez that "Chavez became a leader of Latin American communities in the way of getting their independence from colonialism, capitalism and imperialism".

Animal Rights

The group and its users are quite sensitive about the issue of animal rights, and accordingly, they reveal their concerns and interests through giving place to both local and international news and organizations regarding the issue. The group shared highly shocking photographs taken from international protests and demonstrations exercised in order to raise public awareness to animal rights. The below photograph was posted on the site in 25 March 2013 to reveal to horrible procedures animals are subjected so as to produce consumer goods.



Figure 35: A woman subjected to procedures similar to animal testing

The administrator noted that "The women in the photograph animated the phases through which soap, moisturizer, perfume, cologne and similar products are tested on animals and horrible moments which animals are subjected to. Refusing these products is in our hands. Do read back of the products you will buy and see "not tested on animals" statement. If it is nonexistent, know that they are "tested on

animals””. Although a user commented on the photograph as “The women revealed a real example of courage. This must be the real love for animals. She also proved that animal love is not walking the dog worth a number of thousand dollars”, the photograph and its explanation have been brought about the discussion on vegetarianism and its influence on defending animal rights. In line with such a questioning, a user commented that “Ok, let’s say everybody become vegan, the vitamins we will use should come from vitamins concentrated on drugs which are also tested on animals. If these products are not tested on animals, they will be tested on children of poor countries such as Philippines. There must be another solution which is neither in animal nor in human” referring the futile efforts that animal rights defenders make. In a way, the user underlines the necessity of testing on animals since otherwise, people from underdeveloped countries such Philippines have to be subjected to various horrible procedures. On the other hand, however, the user also sees the need for a third way which does not harm both animals and people suffering from global social inequality and poverty. Furthermore, there are also other users who mentioned the existence of alternative ways to testing and solutions regarding to the issue while we also observe a group who regards these concerns as futile and inconclusive.

Moreover, the below photograph was posted on the site in 28 March 2013 taken from “Animal Equality Protest” during “Day without Meat” in Barcelona and it has received many comments and been shared by many users. Regarding the impact of the protest, many users have shared the idea that it was a convulsive and successful protest by the statements such as “shocking!”, “successful”, “It is a successful vegan protest. This is the protest” and “This is a very meaningful protest. Congratulations”. However, there are also several users who are both irritated by the photograph and do

not share the same concerns with the protestors. The latter group has also challenged the emphasis attributed to vegetarianism and animal meat with the statements that “If we become vegetarians, not eat the meat of a creature, we will be fed by plants. Right? Well, are not plants creatures? Then, will these people protest for not eating packaged leeks?” and “Plants are also creatures, do not eat salad then”.



Figure 36: A photograph taken from a animal rights protest

The last instance I will introduce is about the policy and implementation of a local government in Turkey about the animal rights. A newspaper article was posted on the site about an animal lover who invented stale bread box for animals called “iskap” in which stale breads are collected and given to street dogs. These boxes are bought by Selcuklu Municipality in Konya and they are placed in various spots of the

city. People who are about to throw away stale breads put them in these boxes and street dogs come and get food from a hole in the box. This implementation has been interpreted as “This opinion deserves a prize” and a user stated that “I congratulate all people who spend effort rather than just speaking”. However, although a user regards this implementation as “It is a very nice behaviour”, she still thinks that disadvantaged groups having problems due to social inequality and lack of sufficient social assistance should be the first objects of the social welfare activities of the government. In her words, “Yes, it is a really nice behavior but I wish the same sensitivity will be shown to street children and elderly. I do not understand when cats and dogs have become more important than humans. Do not get me wrong, I am not against the sensitivity for animals but when thousands of people are dying in street due to cold and hunger, this comes weird to me”. Therefore, we can infer from these comments that although users generally have public awareness regarding animal rights, and supports the protests made in the cause of this issue, there are also users who do find these efforts useless and meaningless in accordance with anthropocentrism, and who think that such shocking and intense protest should be performed for excluded or marginalized groups within human species.

Children Rights

The site has an ambition to cover and touch upon the problems of nearly all disadvantaged groups residing in Turkish society and publicize their life practices and living conditions. Within these plurality, an article on children rights and the below photograph was posted on the site including the statistics on education level of children, employment of children and life conditions of children who are sentenced. Moreover, the article informs the readers about the photograph exhibition about the children between the ages of 0 and 6 who are living with their mothers in women’s

prison in Turkey. It is stated in the article that “In Turkey, 479 children continue their lives in prisons. Only children between the ages of 3-6 can go to kindergarden. The children between the ages of 0-3 live in prisons among women prisoners without toys and friends”.



Figure 37: Children working in waste collection and removal

Besides drawing attention to both the numbers and processes of education and socialization of these children, the article further provides significant data regarding the employment policies of the Turkish state on child labour and an example of a thirteen-year-old boy who died in a work accident in a workshop by which he was hired as an informal worker. The article ends with the sentence that “From now on, we should also demand peace and security for children. Let’s raise our voice”.

The Newroz Festival

The Newroz Festival celebrated every year mostly by the Kurdish People and some other nations and communities such as Zaza people, the Uzbek, Kirghiz people

signifying the awakening of the nature. The word “newroz” meaning “new day” carries a historical and mythical significance for those nations celebrating the day in the spirit of a festival. Every nation and community have a different day and a series of rituals of celebration, and the special days for the Kurdish people are March 21, 22 and 23. The government’s huge step regarding the resolution of Kurdish problem have altered the perception of the festival in the eyes of Turkish people such that the relationship between the resolution process and the celebration was the topic of discussion of nearly almost all of the columnist and journalist during the week of the festival. The changing atmosphere is even illustrated in various weekly comic magazines such as *Leman* and *Uykusuz*. *Ötekilerin Postası* has also shared some pieces of comics from these magazines one of them is situated below. *Leman* pictured changing perception and practices regarding the festival in March 20, 2013 with a headline that “This year, Nevruz is celebrated not under the shades of guns but peace”.

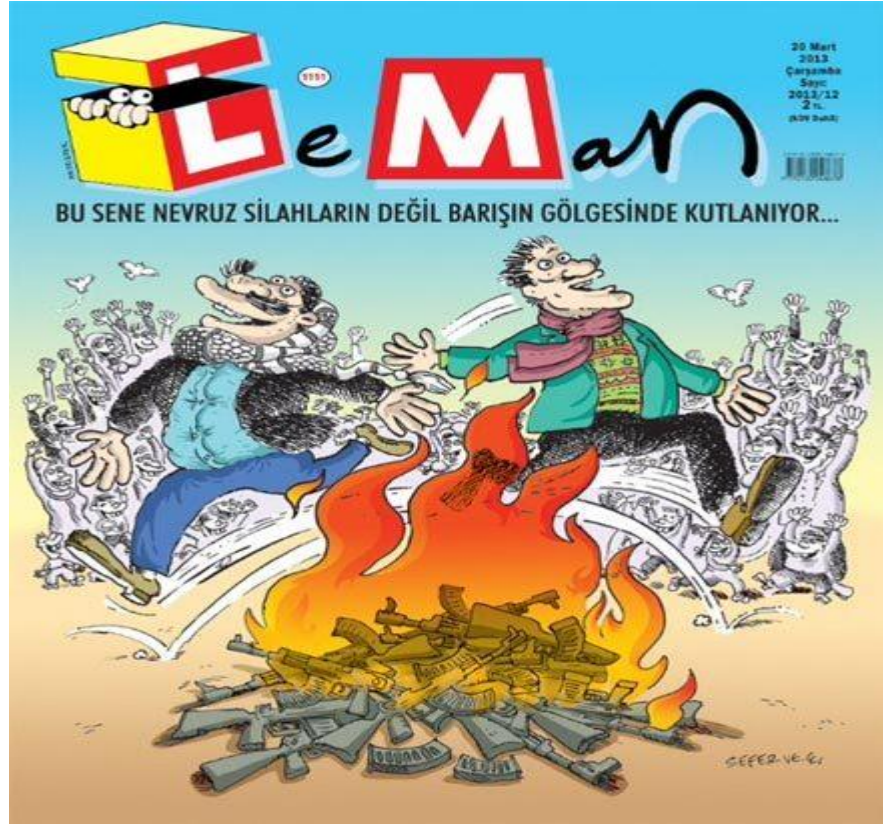


Figure 38: “This year, Nevruz is celebrated not under the shades of guns but peace.”

In line with the cover, a great number of followers liked the comics and one commented as “How nice! This is how it should be”. However, there also appeared a number of opposing comments such as “Nonsense. What peace? There is no obvious peace, the war continues)” and “Nobody have burned their ships, they are florting” revealing their suspicion and distrust to the resolution process. Apart from these two sides, followers also criticized the spelling of the festival as “nevruz” rather than using the original Kurdish word “newroz”.

Ötekileri Postası has preferred to share the images and notes via voluntary correspondents from the area of celebrations organized in many cities of Turkey such as Istanbul, Ankara, Sanlıurfa and Diyarbakır (in Kurdish Amed) and in foreign countries such as Italy, Austria, Germany and Syria. However, most photographs

depicted the spirit and crowd of festival in Diyarbakır known as the center of the Kurdish movement.



Figure 39: “Everything is for a dignified peace- Happy Newroz!”

The photograph on the right above was shared with a note that “Which arena ever witnessed such a crowd in Turkey?” and responded as “Of course, none. That place is the city of Amed” and “No arena, no leader!”. However, these comments also opposed by a follower having nationalist tendencies stating that “Damn imperialism and its means baby killer Apo. Long live fully independent Turkish Republic” and this post was liked by other followers. Moreover, the below photographs including the ones picturing the founders of Ötekilerin Postası and the followers celebrating the festival in Diyarbakır (Amed) and in Ulm, Germany and similar many others were shared with the other followers by the group.



Figure 40: Celebrations in Diyarbakir, Turkey



Figure 41: Celebrations in Ulm, Germany (on the left)
Figure 42: Ötekilerin Postası: "Happy Newroz!"

Student Protests and Police Intervention

As one of the student protests, the incident in METU happened in 18 December 2012 as a response to violent and brutal practices and excessive use of power such as intervention with tear gas, and hot conflict between students and police during the protests happened against Prime Minister Erdoğan's coming to the university with a great number of police officers and other organs of police force. This incident protested in many other universities such as Istanbul Technical University and a huge number of university students supported the critical attitude revealed in METU directed to Prime Minister. In addition to various panels and meetings organized in METU Campus, through the documentary "METU is resisting, artists besides them", the support given by Turkish intellectuals and artists have been revealed.

The below photographs posted on the group compares the march of METU students to the protest done by a group of students from Istanbul University who think that a means for action should be ideas rather than physical social opposition.



Figure 43: "Some people bow before the government, METU is standing!"



Figure 44: “To the people making reminders of September 12: Do not afraid! All these are marginalism.”

The note below the photograph states that “The people who calls students as marginals look at this photograph carefully. Today, the best answer to the people who use the expression of “a group of marginal” to qualify the students protesting the Prime Minister Erdoğan in METU came from METU. While thousands of METU students are gathered in the Revolution Stadium, a group of marginal students in the front of Istanbul University reproved the METU students! Erdoğan, the official from AKP and the rectors who support AKP have been working for weeks in order to present the students protesting Erdoğan in METU as a small group. These protestors are defined as terrorists and marginals”.

As illustrated in this case and many others, police intervention with tear gas has become a common and widespread practice experienced nearly almost all forms of social meetings. Therefore, the below photograph was shared by the group to

underline widespread use of tear gas such that it has become “official drink” of various segments of society such as students, teachers, workers, civil servants and retirees.



Figure 45: “Tear Gas: Official drink of students, teachers, workers, civil servants, laborers, retirees. “Consume with lemon””

This post has received quite deal of attention and commented as “The official drink of resisters”. Besides, it is observed that followers responded to this post with humour. “This tear gas is awesome....METU”, “Do not throw this tear gas, it makes me high” are among those comments having the elements of irony and sarcasm. Moreover, increasing of intervention force by the police Turkish society has been one of the most prominent developments, which Ötekilerin Postası and followers have underlined. In line with such a stress, the below photograph picturing the police officers throwing tear gas cannons was shared by the group with a note that “The only marginal group attending meetings even if it is invented” and commented as “drolling fascist dogs”, “shameless” and “natural robots fueled by gas” by followers who are dissatisfied with the practices of police forces.



Figure 46: A photograph picturing police intervention

However, these comments were responded to by the ones offered by pro-police force followers. One of the comments stated that “You call yourselves human. You are the leaders of a group of stupid people. You turn the streets into a war scene and my honorable Turkish police will touch on you? The police working there could be your father or your brother. I do not have such a problem but this does not matter to you, you are a group of fascists. May God give you reason, brain, mercy and humanity and correct you. Long live my Turkish police and may God help them and you have batons and tear gas. AMEN...”. Apart from these two parties, a follower belonging to Kurdish identity also shared her/his ideas on the topic by a comment that “Look! They are fully equipped with their guns and tear gas, but still, they are about to piss due to fear. I think, they should be afraid of Kurdish youth, nobody can be braver than Kurds. If the Turkish army comes, they cannot deal with us. The thing that the Turkish Republic is afraid of will come and Kurdish people will be the winners”.

In addition, police forces' representation of themselves was also shared by the group with a below photograph taken in Çorlu, Tekirdağ in line with the article titled as "The Turkish Republic is a police state" written by Kolay Çalışkan in Radikal Newspaper in 21 January 2013. He states that "The police state is state in which mechanisms of administration and justice are policized" and referring to recent incidents, he concludes that the Turkish Republic have turned into a police state.

As it is seen, police forces regard themselves the authority of law to be respected and obeyed. This photograph has been liked, shared and commented on a great number of times. Some of the comments include "People should not obey any police in the world. On the contrary, police should obey you. If there is a law system in a country, it exists in order to protect you, not to beat you", "We should even spring to attention when they use uneven power and torture", "Please, obey! Otherwise, you are exposed to high level of gas which is the only thing that they can do" and "No way! The police officer is the officer of the state and I am the citizen of this state. Police is obliged to service me".



Figure 47: "Police is the lawmen. Police should always be respected and obeyed."

While there have already been some incidents and nearly a consensus on the excessive intervention practices of police forces, the Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement in May 2012 that "Private security force in universities will be replaced by police", fostered the level of the related debates. In addition to sharing formal news and statements, Ötekilerin Postası also posted a piece of comics from Gırgır picturing the possible future relationship between university students and police. Regarding this post, a follower shared a quote from Jean Genet as "Police never acted as human beings and when they become human beings, they will no longer be police officers".



Figure 48: "Tayyip Erdoğan: Private security will be removed from universities and they will be replaced by police."

Further, the group also shared a poster titled as "Polis Fest with 174 000 tear gas cannons in 174 universities" designed to picture the events after the police forces'

employment in the universities. Regarding the poster, followers commented as “I think, the idea belongs to his brother Obama. They do this for preventing youth movement” and “Come with your lemon”.



Figure 49: Police Fest in 174 universities with 174 thousand tear gas cannons

Developments in Practice of Law (ÇHD)

The issue at issue refers to the lawyers who are the members of Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği (Progressive Lawyers Association) which defines its mission as “Working for preventing every attack especially on right to live, basic rights and human dignity, developing the law in light of historical achievement gained throughout thousands of years, freeing human and establishing a law system based on the foundation of democracy and guaranteed by social consciousness” were arrested in January 2013 over the claim that they had connection to an organization in Turkey DHKP/C (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party–Front) considered to be organize terrorist activities. As stated in the article by Özgür Mumcu, this non-governmental organization has handled very problematic cases, which may disturb some authorities. Some of these cases include the death of a citizen during police interrogation, students demanding free education, people suffering from police

violence, textile workers who were fired from their jobs and unidentified murders. Moreover, it is stated that the members of the association were quite critical about the will which enforces political cases and the elements of Turkish judicial system in recent times. In response to this event, Ötekilerin Postası has shared various news and tried to raise awareness regarding the issue. The below sticker and photograph were among those post and received attention.



Figure 50: “Revolutionary lawyers are our honour.” - Resisting Workers (on the left)
Figure 51: “Your friend was arrested. Who is next?”

The sticker was shared with a note that “Each morning they took somebody just beside us. Your friend is arrested. Who is next?” and responded as “Me, you, him/her and all others!!!” and “If I don’t burn, If you don’t burn, how will the light vanquish the darkness? How nice Nazım remarked!”.

Alcohol Regulation

The seeds of protests against the regulation of use and selling of alcoholic drinks has been planted since the Prime Minister Erdoğan's speech in "Global Alcohol Policies Symposium" held in Istanbul in April 2013. During his speech, Erdoğan defined the Turkish national beverage as ayran (buttermilk) and further stated by referring to Turkish history of politics that during the foundation years of the Turkish Republic that "With an imitating understanding and for the purpose of becoming civilized, modernized, alcohol consumption has been encouraged.... Luckily, social structure and pattern have resisted alcohol consumption promoted by the state. Thus, more widespread alcohol consumption has been prevented". The Prime Minister further revealed his proud about the ban of alcohol selling in university campuses since university students should not attend to school for being high. In addition to this speech, the Prime Minister's statement during the discussion on the regulation that " We do not want a generation who is high day and night. The nation voted for us to service them. We are implementing the article 58th of the constitution. We want a informed, alive and smart nation" was the most striking statement that a great deal of young Turkish citizens and their families were offended by. Further, The Prime Minister Erdoğan, in one of his interviews claimed that every person drinking alcoholic drinks is an alcoholic regardless of the level of use. Therefore, the alcohol regulation and the Prime Minister's speeches has become one of the hottest topics of discussion in both Turkish social and political life, and expectedly social media.

In line with the atmosphere, Ötekilerin Postası has also gave place to various protests about the attitude of the Prime Minister and it is possible to observe that the protests organized around a single issue also touched upon the other incidents and unresolved social problems occurred and accelerated during the AKP government. The below

photograph taken from a protest on the regulation titled as “We are addicted to our freedom not to alcohol, we are against AKP not buttermilk” posted on the group with the related news published on www.sendika.org and www.kolektifler.net. This news and the photograph have been liked and shared by followers a great number of times. I think that the incidents and social problems categorized under the words “free” and “prohibited” have reflected uneasiness and discontentment of a portion of Turkish citizens defined themselves as the free spirited people giving way to Gezi Park protests as a counter-social movement cross-cutting a quite wide range of social groups residing in Turkish social structure for the reasons namely, preserving their freedom in any field including action, speech, thinking, information. Since, as the photograph illustrates, in response to the government’s attitude regarding the issues such as drinking alcohol, marching and protesting, celebrating the labourday, holding hands in public and the right to abortion, protestors felt that the government has intervened their life choices.



Free /Prohibited

The massacre in Reyhanlı	Drinking alcohol
The massacre in Roboski	Marching
Murdering women	Celebrating May 1
Raping women	Holding hands in public
Smother people with tear gas	

Figure 52: “We are addicted to our freedom not to alcohol, we are against AKP not buttermilk.”

Another critique of the government received by Anti-Kapitalist Müslümanlar Kapitalizmle Mücadele Derneği (Anti-Capitalist Muslims, Fighters with Capitalism Association) in terms of both Erdoğan’s definition of the new generation and the government’s neo-liberal policies. The poster below was shared by Ötekilerin Postası and attracted the great deal of attention with 417 likes and 403 shares.



Figure 53: “He (The Prime Minister) does not want a generation who is sloshed. If so, we do not also want a generation addicted to possession, money and power.” - Anti-Capitalist Muslims, Fighters with Capitalism Association

As the poster indicates, this association has been quite critical about the government’s economic policies in line with neo-liberal principles and by disapproving Erdoğan’s statement about the new generation, and they stated that “If so, we do not also want a generation addicted to possession, money and power”. Thus, despite their commonality in terms of Islamic worldview, the association regards the government as the collaborator of capitalist accumulation and seeker of power and authority, which are defined by Islam as the things the self should be abstained from.

Roboski Massacre

Roboski Massacre also known as Uludere Massacre has been nearly the hottest topic of discussion over the past two years in Turkish politics and social media with especially the statements of government officials and the Prime Minister himself. The incident took place in December 28, 2011 near Turkish-Iraqi border in Şırnak as two Turkish F-16 jets accidentally killed villagers because of misinformation that PKK militants were passing over the border. The Turkish Government acknowledged that those people killed are the regular smugglers living in the area rather than terrorists.

Ötekilerin Postası has been the follower of the incident and every progress related to it. Before and after the Uludere Report prepared by the Uludere Sub-Committee within The Turkish Grand National Assembly in March 2013 concluding that “It is reached to the opinion that the incident was not performed intentionally”, the group has insistently questioned elements of the incident and the attitude of the government. The below comics posted on the group in the same month and received a great deal of attention by followers. Believing that the responsables for the incident are the AKP government and the Prime Minister, followers liked this comics and shared it considerable number of times.

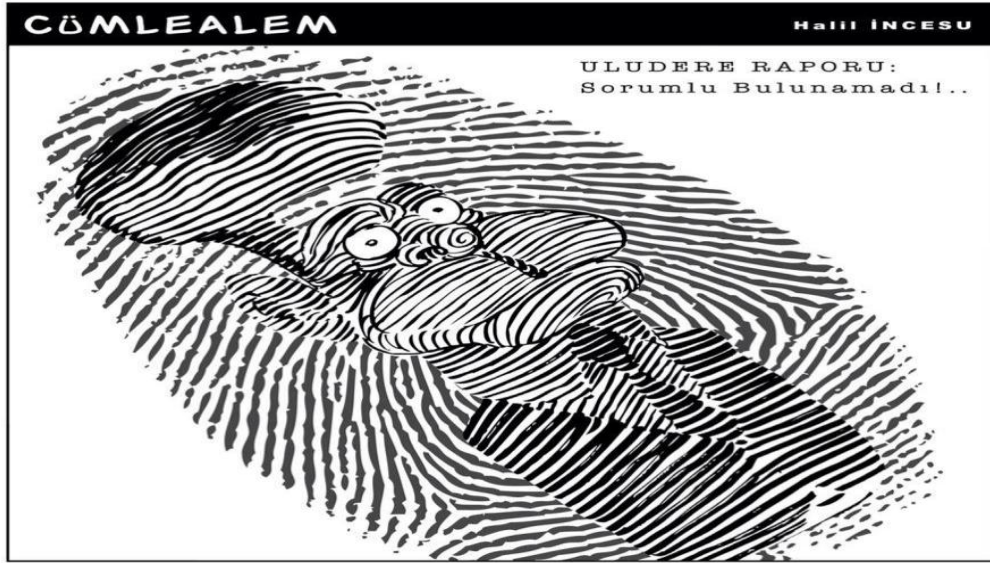


Figure 54: Uludere Report:” No responsible found”.

The comments revealed citizens’ distrust to the report as they stated “In order to find the responsables, they need a mirror so that they see themselves” and “The commission is composed of 5 members from AKP out of 8 members. This report is only a ‘covered’ report. The devil looks after his own”.

Ötekilerin Postası has also shared the scenes from the various protests one of which is situated below. This photograph was posted on the site with a note that “Kurds are continued to be killed by the state. Have your dreams ever bombarded? ” giving way to comments revolving around the issue that a six-year old child, Enes Ata, was killed in Diyarbakır in 2006 by a gas canister hit to his head and the jurisdiction did not let any further investigation regarding the incident.



Figure 55: “All states are murderers. We will not forget, we will not forgive”.

In line with the Uludere report, this incident reminded by followers fostered their call for the government to identify the offenders as they state “There will not be peace until the responsible are called to account for the incident”, and “34 Life 34 People. If I forget, my heart will fade”.

Anarchist Platform

The group has also embodied a critical stance against the issue of consumerism and, in line with their opposition to capitalist consumer culture, Ötekilerin Postası has shared the release about the barter bazaar organized by Anarchist Platform in Ankara University with the photograph taken from the bazaar.



Figure 56: Barter Bazaar- Anarchist Platform

The release clearly states that “The purpose of this bazaar is as simple as its method. It is not about get rid of our unused possessions. The purpose is to rule out consumer culture and capitalist relations of consumption as much as possible, to share with the method of exchange, to reinforce solidarity between people and to reach what we need by giving a thing which one might be need. We claim, even we are sure, that this is more important than money”. The post has been liked by a great number of followers and even a follower commented on the issue as “Nice and brilliant”.

May 1 International Labour Day

Ötekilerin Postası has also publicized the fractions dealing with emancipatory politics, and their demands and ideals illustrated before the labour day through various posters of Dev-lis (Revolutionary High School Students), Sosyalist Gençlik Dernekleri Federasyonu and (The Federation of Socialist Youth Associations) Toprak ve Özgürlük Kolektifi (Soil and Freedom Collective) situated below which were highly liked and shared by followers.



Figure 57: “Put on your anger, stand up in May 1.” - The Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (on the left)

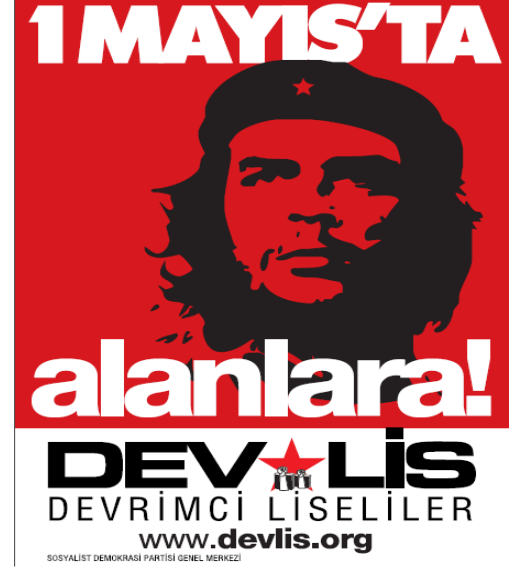


Figure 58: “To the streets, in May 1!” - Revolutionary High School Students



Figure 59: “For equal, free, scientific education in native language, to the streets in May 1 for lighting a spark.” - Revolutionary High School Students



Figure 60: “We are in the streets in May 1. A Communist world will come with anarchy!” - Soil and Freedom Collective

Apart from the posters, the most vital discussions about the day appeared on the group over the decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the place of the annual celebration of the labour day in May 1 due to Taksim pedestrianization project resulting in, first, a hot conflict between labour unions such as DİSK and the ministry, and then, workers and the police force. Since Taksim Square bears a historical significance for Turkish workers after the incident in 1 May 1977 in which 367 workers participated to the celebration in that square killed during the event, labour unions were reluctant to use another space for celebration. The below photograph taken by a voluntary correspondent of Ötekilerin Postası prevised the oncoming conflicts as the banner stated “Your repression and bans will not work. We do not accept the prohibition on Taksim”.



Figure 61: “Your repression and bans will not work. We do not accept the prohibition on Taksim.”

Demolishment of Emek Movie Theater

Emek Movie Theater was a historical building used since 1924 under different names and it was decided to be demolished as a part of a shopping mall construction project. The protests regarding the planned demolition continued since 2010 mainly

in Istanbul and reached their the most intense level right before the destruction. As Hürriyet Daily News reports that “Police deployed water cannon and tear gas on April 7 to disperse a group of thousands, including Greek-French director Costa-Gavras and many actors, who had marched on Istanbul’s iconic Emek Cinema to protest the demolition of the historic building.” Further, during the protests, many protestors were taken into custody by the police. In line with this news and , Ötekilerin Postası has shared the statement of Gavras appealing to the Prime Minister Erdoğan to save the building in order not to commerce overcome the culture and many other photographs from the protests revealing the excessive use of power by the police force. In response to this statement, followers generally revealed their hopelessness about the issue and the attitude of the Prime Minister, and one of them even commented about the efforts of Gavras as “He spoke to the wall”.

Similar protests made in different cities of Turkey and Ötekilerin Postası has shared their reflections on its followers. The left down protest poster titled as “You are responsible for the demolishment of Emek!. Cancel the license! ” was shared by the group to maintain public awareness regarding the issue. The photograph on the right shared with the group by a voluntary correspondent reflected the protest and encounters of protesters with the police force. This photograph was commented generally in terms of the great number of police officers and limited participation as “It seems that Emek was not ours If they attacked everthing and nobody raise their voice, the future is destined to be darker. It is a sad situation. Lots of things are accepted. It must be the final point of disorganization. Feeling oneself as powerless and weak. I think the number of people who think that I cannot make difference has been increased. Greetings to all people in the streets fighting for their honour and resisting against injustices”.

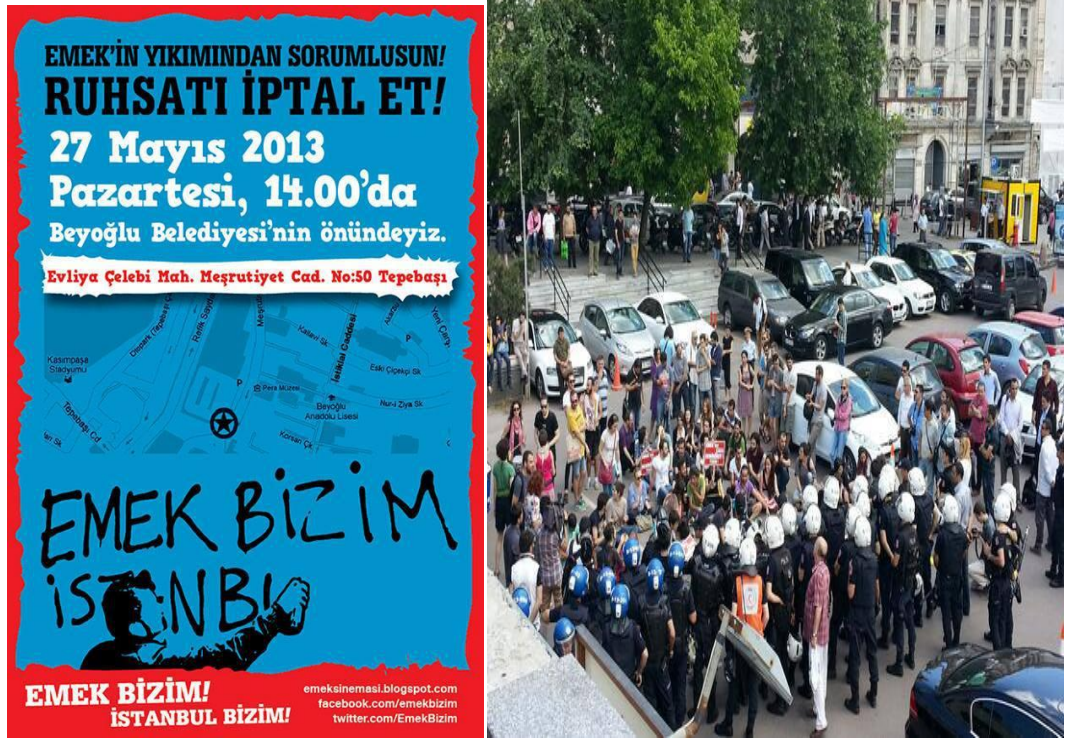


Figure 62: “You are responsible for the demolition of Emek! Cancel the licence!”

Aid Campaigns

Besides having various concerns ranging from issues related to identity, animal rights, cultural heritage, environment to workers’ rights, Ötekilerin Postası has also functioned as a civil society organization in taking parts in the campaigns designed to respond the needs of the disadvantaged groups. One of these campaigns aimed at collecting socks for children living in the city, Şanlıurfa located in the southeastern region of Turkey. Since the city and generally the region suffer from poverty, social inequality and harsh living conditions, Ötekilerin Postası has helped to announce and publicize the campaign. The below campaign poster was posted on the group wall with a note that “We are collecting socks for primary and middle school children between the ages of 6-15”. The post was liked and shared by followers in considerable times and followers tried to find new ways to raise the

level of participation to the campaign. For instance, a follower suggested contacting with various airline firms in order to arrange free aid transfers to the city.



Urfa Sıra Geceleri
SAYFASI KATKILARIYLA

* FUNDA ATEŞOĞLU
* BURHAN AKAR
* YUSUF SABRİ DİŞLİ

ŞANLIURFADAKİ ÇORAPSIZ ÇOCUKLAR İÇİN
FAZLA ÇORABINIZ VAR MI ?
KAMPANYAMIZ ŞANLIURFA VALİLİĞİNDEN ONAYLIDIR.
YARDIMLARI GÖNDERECEĞİNİZ ADRES : 75. YIL MESLEKİ EĞİTİM MERKEZİ
(ADLİYE YANI, İŞKUR ARKASI, ÇAĞLAYAN İLKOKUL ARKASI) ŞANLIURFA

05073529963

#FazlaCorabinVarmi fundaaatesoglu@gmail.com facebook.com/fazlacorabinvarmi

Figure 63: “Do you have extra socks?”

Ötekilerin Postası has also supported the campaign organized by Diyarbakır Municipalities for Syrian people who are the victims of the civil war by sharing its campaign poster. The campaign aimed at collecting especially the most necessary food supplies for babies and adults such as baby food, diaper and legumes.



Suriye'ye Yardım Kampanyası
“Gün, aşımızı paylaşma günüdür”

DIYARBAKIR BELEDİYELERİ SURİYE HALKINA YARDIM KAMPANYASI
YARDIM TOPLAMA MERKEZLERİ VE SORUMLULARIN İLETİŞİM BİLGİLERİ

TOPLANACAK MALZEMELER
Un, kuru bakliyat, pirinç, yağ, çay, şeker, çocuk maması ve çocuk bezi

- 1. BÜYÜKŞEHİR BELEDİYESİ**
Sosyal Hizmetler Dairesi Başkanlığı Sümerpark
Ortak Yaşam Alanı/İstasyon Meydanı
Azad Semerkand:
0532 597 44 05
Özkan Macar:
0533 646 39 84
Sosyal Hizmetler Daire Başkanlığı:
0412 226 22 98
- 2. BAĞLAR BELEDİYESİ**
Zabıta Müdürlüğü, Nühket Coşkun Caddesi
Eyüp Çokla:
0533 311 71 93
Zabıta: 0412 235 80 46
- 3. KAYAPINAR BELEDİYESİ**
Makine İkmal Şantiyesi, Kayapınar Cad.
İMKB İlköğretim Okulu yanı
Zülküf Batugay: 0533 425 06 83
Şantiye: 0412 252 26 21
- 4. YENİŞEHİR BELEDİYESİ**
Temizlik Şantiyesi, Alıpınar
Mustafa Akınca: 0532 215 50 57
Şantiye: 0412 234 17 12
- 5. SUR BELEDİYESİ**
Mardinkapı Şantiyesi,
Mardinkapı Mezarlığı karşısı
Nihat Çiftçi: 0530 200 89 67
Şantiye: 0412 226 44 61

Figure 64: Aid campaign for Syria, “Today is the day we share our food.”

Although such a campaign designed to help war wearies is generally common, the interesting point to be highlighted is that the note posted to the group stating that “Aid campaign for Rojava” rather than the “Aid Campaign for Syria” as written in the poster. Since the word “Rojava” stands for both “west” and the Kurdish region in Syria, we can infer that in addition to its primary objective which is helping to the disadvantaged as a universal concern of social solidarity, for Ötekilerin Postası, the campaign also functioned as a solidarity gesture with their ethnically-related relatives. In other words, the campaign has also bear an aspect fostering the feeling of belongingness to an ethnic (Kurdish) community, practices of sharing and solidarity with a particular identity- related motivation. The comments the post received mainly revolved around questioning the subject of the campaign namely, whether they were opponents to the regime or not without mostly paying attention to ethnic solidarity with the Kurdish community.

In addition to publicizing the campaigns organized for the victims of social inequality and war, Ötekilerin Postası has also literally functioned as significant space for the people suffered form the rules and practices of the regime under one lives such as Amina from Tunusia sentenced to death by the religious authorities since she shared a semi-nude photograph of her body over which it was written “My body belongs to me. It cannot be the source of honour for anybody” on Facebook. After Ötekilerin Postası shared this news with its followers, a huge discussion on the issue and the common perception of women body has functioned as a campaign.

Ötekilerin Postası has also given way to a campaign for a rape victim and publicized the call of her father demanding justice. The related poster “I want justice for my daughter” and the protest happened in the place which the crime was committed shared by Ötekilerin Postası and received incredible response from the followers

such that over 1300 people have liked, 9000 people share the demand of the father and the comments received exceeded 200.

**Kızım için adalet
istiyorum**

**SESİME SES VERİN İKİNCİ
N.Ç DAVASI YAŞANMASIN**



Figure 65: “I want justice for my daughter.” (on the left)

Figure 66: “We want real justice.”, “You will never walk alone”.

The comments include “There are websites for petitions. You should also go to civil society organizations protecting women and call for help”, “I support you all my heart and congratulate you for your strong stance”, “As a father, supporting your daughter in such a horrible situation is a real example of fatherhood. Our justice system is, unfortunately, lacks values of humanity. Be with your daughter. Do not let these beastly people ruin your life, relationship with your daughter and your stance against life”. In addition to such polite and reasonable comments, a significant portion of followers also demanded capital punishment for the rapist. Further, women in Denizli made a statement to the press about the demand for justice with the banner written on them “The offender should be ashamed”, “Rape is not our fate” and “You will never walk alone”.

LGBT People and Their Rights

Ötekilerin Postası has underlined struggles for the rights and freedoms of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) people and publicized their efforts in order to raise awareness to their efforts. The photographs posted by the group and the comments received have revealed the peculiar concern for the LGBT movement. Such that the left-down photograph was commented as “Shame on the state which, in a situation when human life is the subject matter, cannot create the law on hatred crimes in case the way for marriages are opened. Whether you want us or not, we are here. We are disabled in military, immoral in street, corrupt in the assembly. Prohibit and kill us then, your brains thirsty for blood calms down. Hypocrisy suffocates people” referring to dominant discourse in Turkey and the statement of AKP representative that homosexuality is immoral. The right of homosexual marriage is also noted regarding the post in the right down. The comments on this post touched upon the psychology of children grew up with two dads and general assumptions and prejudices about homosexuality.



Figure 67: A photograph taken from a protest for gay marriage (on the left)
 Figure 68: A photograph supporting gay marriage and right to have children

The group also introduced some factions within the movement which are generally thought to be as contradictory by its nature such as Muslims LGBT people.



Figure 69: A photograph revealing the existence of Muslim LGBT people

Besides sharing various posts fostering public discussion among followers, Ötekilerin Postası also informed followers about academic discussions such as the panel titled “Contradictions of Sexual Citizenship and Reproductive Rights in Transnational Context” held in Sabancı University. Moreover, the group reminded its followers the monthly discussion meeting organized by Lambdaistanbul which is a homosexual civil society initiative.

As the last form of practice, Ötekilerin Postası highlighted the violence against LGBT people and related protests regarding the issue. The below photograph taken from a protest against murders of LGBT people complaining about harrasment from which they suffer.



Figure 70: “Stop the murders of transsexuals”

5.4. Discussion

5.4.1. Facebook as a Form of Virtual Public Sphere

As mentioned in the chapter 3, social media and social network sites have carried the potential for deepening democratization, encouraging political participation and expression through a new form of public sphere it provides. Described as the

technological version of public sphere by Benvivenga, this new form is comparatively more essential to the countries, which lacked an open and transparent public sphere promoting public discussion, expression and civic involvement throughout their histories such as Turkey. Generative and collaborative possibilities of social network sites, in this case Facebook, has functioned as a public sphere voicing the needs and demands of various counter-publics and groups which have been otherized both through Turkish modernization process and the recent history shaped by AKP government in Turkey.

Following the principle of equality among members, referring the personal experience and reinforcing the relationship with the media, Facebook in Turkey, has been a channel through which citizens have a chance to be included and intervene in politics, which has been distanced from citizens since the foundation of the Republic and especially after the 1980 military coup. Throughout the modernization process, the Turkish public sphere shaped by Kemalist elites and state as the autonomous subject, governed by an organic, heterogeneous national identity subjugating its others has functioned both as a site of modernity and as one of elements of nation-building project. Moreover, with the 1980 military coup, Turkish public sphere has been reformed and reconstituted with the purpose of depoliticization and eradication of active citizen participation on public discussion. Therefore, Facebook, with its potential for virtual politics, has provided a new form public sphere in online domain fostering political participation and expression through social media in Turkey responding revival of politicization of society.

The nature of this virtual public sphere both conflicts and accords with various models of public spheres introduced above. To begin with, while the virtual public sphere in Facebook differs from discourse model of public sphere proposed by

Ferree and discursive understanding of public sphere by Habermas in terms of their emphasis on deliberation, sharing common basic values and moral rules, it shares the principle of popular inclusion and participation. Since Facebook has a quite heterogeneous and diverse user profile having different affinities in terms of religion, ethnicity and political orientation, it is nearly impossible to find values and norms binding users except the rules and regulations of the site. Moreover, the users do not necessarily participate to discussion following the principle of deliberation and rational-critical reasoning. A considerable portion of users participate to public discussions mostly through the practices of clicktivism and slactivism without expressing a piece of their opinions which will make a difference or contribute to the discussion. Therefore, it is possible to assert that while the virtual public sphere has an incredible potential for involving politics, it also results in passivity or overcrowding of information which are nearly the same in quality.

The public discussion made in Facebook, of course, is not limited to this “less-active” and productive forms of political participation. In other words, Habermas’ claim that “refeudalization of society” results in passive cultural consumption and apolitical sociability does not fully reflect the whole structure of public sphere in late-modern times. As a positive point, the virtual public sphere formed through Facebook also responds the criticisms directed to Habermas. For instance, Facebook includes many social groups having different perspectives of “good”, “truth” etc. who are critical about the dominant discourses and voices and publicizes the struggle for recognition of different identity groups in Turkey such as LGBT people and Kurdish people. With these characteristics, the virtual public sphere welcomes the sub-altern counter publics and their movements, and opens the way for identity politics, which were identified lacking in Habermasian bourgeois public sphere by

Calhoun and Fraser. Moreover, Eley's criticism regarding overemphasis on consensus and neglect of continuous conflict in Habermasian model is also realized through the virtual public sphere in Facebook such that the claims of diverse social groups and identities are in constant conflict and subjected to deep questioning through the process of discussions. Herein, the point needs to be underlined is that since, by the influence of postmodern thinking and its principles favouring deconstruction of cores of modern ways of thinking, the discussions of many identity groups tend to disregard rational reasoning and homogeneity, and prefer other forms of expression, ways of knowing, plurality and difference. Therefore, Habermasian emphasis on consensus and rational-critical debate favoured by modern thinking does not correspond to dominant picture in the public sphere in Facebook. Therefore, the virtual public sphere provided by Facebook highly corresponds to the constructionist model of public sphere proposed by Ferre following the line of thinking of Michel Foucault. Since this model encourages popular inclusion by extending the scope of 'the political', it fosters political participation and expression of ordinary citizens through an alternative and less formal understanding of politics welcoming difference, heterogeneity and plurality of standpoints and styles of expressions.

As mentioned in chapter 2, in late-modern age, with developments of new information and communication technologies, the public sphere has shifted from institutional realm to new communication space. The abovementioned structure of the virtual public sphere proposed by Facebook has been utilized by Turkish citizens both in everyday practices and extraordinary incidents such as Uludere Massacre and Gezi Park protests. Especially in Gezi Park protests as an instance of new social movement in Turkey, Facebook users actively expressed their opinions, produced

and distributed political information and participated to policies and decision-making processes of the movement. Therefore, Turkish citizens as Facebook users who were critical about the implementations and policies of AKP government intensively participate to this social movement both through their utilization of Facebook both as a source of political information and news, and as a space for political participation and expression.

The Gezi Park protests started on 28 May 2013 initially for protesting the urban development plan including the removal of trees from the park for constructing a shopping mall in their place for Taksim Gezi Park in Istanbul. The violent intervention of police to younger people protesting the plan by sit-ins at the park has fired the intensity of conflict and citizen involvement to the issue. The concerns for freedom of expression and press, AKP government's perturbational statements on some issues such as abortion, public kissing, alcohol use, unconcern of cultural and historical heritage such as Emek Movie Theater and many other issues exemplified in the subsequent section have unified critical segments of Turkish society under this social movement. The subjects of the protests then broadened beyond the development of Taksim Gezi Park into wider anti-government demonstrations. The government's encroachment to secularism and intervention of citizens' lifestyles in the name of morality have regarded as a threat by citizens who follow Kemalist ideology, different fractions of left-wing political organizations and parties, and various counter-publics belonging different identities. As Göle states, the movement differs from French civil protests of 1968, Arab Spring and Europe's "angry citizen" movement despite sharing some common principles. Regarding the structure of the movement, Göle states that,

The Gezi movement has united people in a square and around a tree against the polarizing policies and rhetoric of the ruling party. It has brought together people, ideas, lifestyles and clubs that are hard to get to come together, including young and old people, students and bureaucrats, feminists and housewives, Muslims and leftists, Kurds and Alevis, Kemalists and communists, Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş supporters. These people might have taken the stage perhaps only for a moment, but that moment has been engraved on the square and on the collective memory.

Therefore, it is possible to claim that the issues and events discussed above covered by Ötekilerin Postası and citizens' intensified and concentrated reaction to them resulted in high level of political participation to the social explosion. In other words, through this social movement, a great portion of Turkish citizens was united under the category of being "other" and express their unrest against the perspective and policies of AKP government both in offline and online domain through Facebook. The most used words during the protests were "fascism", "dictator", "sultan" which were mentioned in a great majority of posters, banners and graffiti shared through Facebook. In many designs, The Prime Minister was pictured as Adolf Hitler such of which are situated below.





Figure 71, 72 and 73: Designs and graffities produced during Gezi Park protests

Moreover, after the statement of the Prime Minister referring the protestors as “bir avuç çapulcu” roughly translated “just a few looters”, “marauders” or “bums”, the “çapulcu” has been the most famous phrase in the virtual public sphere such that this practice of otherisation was rapidly reappropriated by the protestors, both in its original form and as the anglicized chapuller and additionally verbified chapulling, given the meaning of "fighting for your rights". In line with this reappropriation, followers added the word “çapulcu” (chapuller) as an adjective to their names through which they reveal their critical stance towards the Prime Minister. Moreover, humour was used by the protestors as a weapon through various designs and covers of comic magazines.



GIRGIR

LEŞ GİBİ ÖZGÜRLÜK KOKUYO!



Figure 74: “It stinks freedom to high heaven”



TOGETHER WE CHAPUL
DIVIDED WE FALL





Figure 75, 76, 77 and 78: Designs and graffiti produced during Gezi Park protests

(Continuing)

The pressure felt by mainstream media either privately owned by a pro-government company or having a necessary connection with the government revealed especially in the first week of the events such that only a few TV channels such as Ulusal Channel and Halk TV having Kemalist ideology broadcasted the conflicts live. In such an atmosphere, the virtual public sphere that Facebook provides has functioned as both a channel of public discussion fostered by political participation and expression of its users giving way to the direction to the movement and as a form of alternative media. Moreover, the posts shared by the users have filled the information gap that mainstream media had purposively preferred not to cover. Pro-movement

citizens directed their criticisms towards mainstream media for both underestimating the movements, and misinforming and misrepresenting the latest developments through Facebook. The below photograph has been highly shared by users underlining the single-sided broadcasting understanding of Turkish mainstream media. With their critique of mainstream media, the virtual public sphere in Facebook defended their right to be objectively informed about the movement.



Figure 79: “Same news two different agency”

Anadolu Agency- “Some people among the group who started protesting over the claim that constructions continuing in a part of Taksim Gezi Park were done in relation to Taksim Militray Barracks project attacked construction equipments.”

Reuters- “A Turkish riot policeman uses tear gas as people protests against the destruction of the trees in a park brought about by a pedestrian project.”

The public sphere created by Facebook has both organized and supplemented psychical organization performed in offline domain such that protesters and users have kept in touch through their utilization of Facebook even in the middle of the most brutal and violent police intervention. Moreover, protesters shared the addresses of places and infirmaries, which will help injured protestors, and wi-fi

passwords of the closest places to the protests fields in order to be informed about the events, reveal the practices of police force with the Turkish public and form solidarity with the protestors.

In addition to these practices, Facebook has been utilized as an online news bulletin board sharing both the latest information from the field and various news article and support letters from national and international public sphere. For instance, sharing the articles and photographs on Gezi protests published in the Guardian, the Huffingpost, New York Times and Time magazines, the speeches of government officials of different countries such as The United States and Germany in Facebook have functioned as a means for reinforcing the belief to the struggle both against the practices of police force and the policies and stance of AKP government throughout the movement. Moreover, the support given to the movement and the call for sobriety to AKP government from many important public, academic figures and artists such as Patti Smith, Joan Baez, Roger Waters, Tom Yorke, Noam Chomsky and Alain Badiou have also been publicized through Facebook.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN TURKEY?

People of Turkey have spoken: **WE WILL NOT BE OPPRESSED!**

Millions are outraged by the violent reaction of their government to a peaceful protest aimed at saving Istanbul's Gezi Park.

Outraged, yet not surprised.

Over the course of Prime Minister Erdoğan's ten-year term, we have witnessed a steady erosion of our civil rights and freedoms. Arrests of numerous journalists, artists, and elected officials and restrictions on freedom of speech, minorities' and women's rights all demonstrate that the ruling party is not serious about democracy.

Time and again, the Prime Minister has mocked and trivialized his nation's concerns while Turkey's own media have remained shamefully silent.

The people protesting bravely throughout Turkey are ordinary citizens. We span several generations and represent a spectrum of ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, ideological, sexual, and gender identities. We stand united because of our concern for Turkey's future. Our future.

WE DEMAND AN **END TO POLICE BRUTALITY**.

WE DEMAND A **FREE MEDIA**.

WE DEMAND **OPEN DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE** between citizens and those elected to public service, not the dictates of special interests.

WE DEMAND AN **INVESTIGATION** of the government's recent abuse of power, which has led to the loss of innocent lives.

Join the conversation and stand with us in solidarity.

CROWDFUNDED ENTIRELY BY CONCERNED INDIVIDUALS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Gezi Democracy Movement gezidemocracymovement@gmail.com

Figure 80: The advertisement published in New York Times on June 4 2013.

Besides sharing many latest developments, government statements, health conditions of injured protesters and the funeral and commoration ceremonies of the protesters who were killed during the protests, citizens as Facebook users utilized the virtual public sphere provided by Facebook to disseminate information about various practices of solidarity existed throughout the movement resembling the philosophy of socialism such as Gezi library, free market called “Devrim Market (Revolution Market)” and free clinic service with the photographs taken by the protestors from the field of protests.



Figure 81, 82 and 83: Devrim (Revolution) Market and Gezi Park Library

Moreover, free lessons for high school and university students given by teachers, free plays and concerts given by famous artists were among the topics highlighted by the virtual public sphere throughout the movement. All these formations and practices were in line with the protests' critiques of capitalism and neoliberal policies embodied by the government. Since Gezi Protest was "not just about a park" but targeted resisting destruction of environment for maximizing economic gain-construction of a shopping mall-, protestors compensate their lives without using money as a tool for consumption. The life in various protest fields was organized according to the principle of "getting as much as one needs" through social cooperation and solidarity. Moreover, many free concerts and artistic performances were organized in order to reinforce the spirit of the movement and criticize philosophy of capitalism. All these elements were discussed and organized through Facebook by users.



Figure 84: A photograph taken from a free concert during Gezi Park protests

This understanding has also been supplemented by the virtual public sphere with the rising concerns for anti-consumerism and critiques of finance world, and support to small local business owners rather than consuming from shopping malls. In line with approach, users shared the information of various public-markets in their cities and posted as “Use cash, prefer local markets and groceries, DO NOT GO TO SHOPPING MALL!”.

All these practices and critiques of government, mainstream media, capitalism and finance sector expressed via the virtual public sphere has been criticized by government officials and social media was regarded as a space of provocation letting to produce and distribute misinformation and lies such that, for the Prime Minister, “social media is the worst menace to society.” Even government officials have demanded collaboration from Facebook and Twitter administrations to identify users who shared anti-government content. However, although social media has been regarded as the enemy, the Prime Minister, the President, ministers and the governors of Ankara and Istanbul have utilized social media sites to communicate with the Turkish society in order to justify their stance in the movement.

While Facebook has opened up an opportunity for the formation of democratic and open virtual public sphere encouraging political participation and expression, it has also restricted the scope of this sphere and censored the context it included as exemplified in the instance of Ötekilerin Postası. Although Facebook itself has functioned as an alternative media throughout the Gezi Protests, the Facebook administration has performed some restrictive and prohibitive practices throughout the year over users’ complaints leading to closing the group’s page in July 2013 in second time due to having so-called “pornographic content”. Regarding this latest development, the co-founder of the group Emrah Uçar stated that “Although there

are various websites having sexual content in Facebook, why don't they close them? Thus, this makes us think that closing of our page is intentional. The pages closed have been oppositional pages, a few pages supporting the system has been closed. The attitude of Facebook administration is not different than attitude of state.” Further, according to the article, before the closing of the group page, Ötekilerin Postası was banned in due to the news about the recent incidents in Rojava, Syria and #DirenHamile (#ResistPregrant) hashtag, and now continues sharing news from an another page in Facebook. The group calls its followers to be in solidarity from #ÖtekilerinPostasıSusturulamaz hashtag against censorship of Facebook. According to the news published in Agos, Ötekilerin Postası has been working for founding an agency on citizen journalism and as soon as the agency enters into service, they will leave repressive implementations of Facebook. Therefore, while, as experienced during Gezi Park protests, Facebook revitalizes the active political participation and expression of Turkish citizens through the virtual public sphere and lessens the democracy deficit of Turkish political history, in the case of Ötekilerin Postası, it resembles the disciplinary and restrictive Turkish public sphere giving way to subjugation of difference and freedom of expression and regarded as “faşistbook”(fascistbook) by its users. In this way, the dominant practices of othering observed throughout the Turkish political history and in the period the ruled by AKP government has been reproduced through the practices of Facebook administration leading constant struggle for representation and expression of various groups of “Others”.

5.4.2. Analysis of Ötekilerin Postası through a Multitheoretical Approach

In this section of the discussion, Ötekilerin Postası will be analysed in terms of the four approaches introduced in Chapter 3.

5.4.2.1. Ötekilerin Postası Serving the Community

As a collaborative news network and an instance of alternative media, Ötekilerin Postası has revealed a quite complex structure having both essentialist and non-essentialist understanding of community. To begin with, although various social groups residing in the group embodies different concerns in terms of representation, rights, freedom and expression, they unite in being situated as “other” in Turkish social structure. Therefore, despite diversity of interests, the grand interest binding these multiple segments of society is to receive recognition. In this respect, followers of Ötekilerin Postası can be regarded as the members of a “community of interest”. Furthermore, since followers perform some common practices such as producing, consuming and distributing media content with their passion about an issue or a topic by through constant interaction, it is possible to infer that Ötekilerin Postası includes the “communities of practice”. Thus, in line with these characteristics, it is quite possible to claim that Ötekilerin Postası composed of networked publics forming an imagined collective for a common interest by common practices with a non-essentialist understanding of community.

Although these two types of understanding are generally associated with offline domain and geographical space, the virtual space also enables such a reconceptualization and convergence. However, as mentioned before, Facebook is much more suitable for political expression of various identities such as Kurdish identity and LGBT people due to its feature, which separate private sphere from the public one, allows more active and uncensored political participation and expression through social media. Thus, due to organization and practices of these groups, they can also be classified as “communities of interest” in terms of essentialist understanding. As exemplified in the issues such as aid campaigns, newroz festival,

Kurdish language directly and in many others indirectly, especially followers having Kurdish identity act as a members of an unified and harmonius community struggling for their rights and freedoms and living in solidarity even with the ones in Syria.

In addition to these two understandings of community, Ötekilerin Postası can easily be defined as “virtual community” corresponding both the perspectives of Castells and Rheingold. Since Ötekilerin Postası almost exactly fit the definitions since it is both relatively formalized due to its bulletin board systems, and spontaneously formed by via structure of the social network site enabling followers to send and retrieve messages in a particular time pattern. Within the group, followers having similar concerns and problems meet, and share their opinions through computer-mediated communication. However, the point needs to be underlined refers to the fact that while virtual communities usually tends to break ties with the offline domain and creates another version of life separate and distant from the structure of offline life, Ötekilerin Postası as a virtual community exists in order to restructure and transform offline domain. In other words, by informing its followers about the alternative perspectives, and ways of thinking and perceiving in offline sphere, Ötekilerin Postası handles the offline as the object of its existence. Thus, although it fulfils all the prerequisites of being a virtual community, due to its abovementioned characteristic, Ötekilerin Postası cannot be identified as an ordinary and conventional virtual community. Apart from all these forms of communities, Ötekilerin Postası can also be defined as an imagined community. In line with the contingent nature of community formation underlined by Anderson, Ötekilerin Postası functions as an “imagined community” composed of followers who engage in active political participation and expression. According to this understanding, all political

communities, even nation-states are formed through some principles and concerns designed to hold a group of people together. Therefore, this constructedness makes Ötekilerin Postası as an instance of an imagined community existing in virtual space and time.

Even though Ötekilerin Postası carries the potential for abovementioned community conceptualizations, this possibility does not influence both the form and level of participation of followers. As mentioned in Chapter 3, alternative media and its encouragement for public participation can be analysed in terms of participation in and through media. Regarding participation in media, Ötekilerin Postası enables and fosters content related participation through its call for citizen journalism performed by ordinary citizens defined by Radsch (2013) as "an alternative and activist form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a repose to shortcoming in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism". The form of citizen journalism embodied by the group is carried out by voluntary correspondents sharing information and visuals from the place of the news mostly with a less formal language and from a different perspective than mainstream media. Moreover, followers can also practise structural participation, namely participation to decision-making process such that they criticize some posts and language used by editors of the group, and even demand more information or removal of the post from the group page despite leading role of the administration. Thus, we can assert that the group is also governed by the performance of active citizens participating in decision-making process of the media.

The group's potential for participation through media exemplified in preceding section is the most distinctive characteristic of Ötekilerin Postası. Since Ötekilerin Postası was created for the purpose of self-presentation and expression of various counter-publics, sub-altern groups and identities otherised in Turkish society, and therefore, democratization of communication, participation through media remains as the most indispensable feature of the group. While the dominant modes of participation through media in Ötekilerin Postası are dialogues and hot debates on diverse issues and incidents, followers also use "like" and "share" button to reveal their participation. Through dialogues and debates, followers manifest their conflicting ideas most of which have the purpose of resisting to hegemonic and dominant discourses such as LGBT people, claiming recognition, demanding rights and freedoms such as women movement and workers and raising public consciousness such as the campaign for the rape victim.

5.4.2.2. Ötekilerin Postası as an Alternative to Mainstream Media

The relationship between alternative and mainstream media can be handled by analysing alternative media as a supplement to mainstream media or as a counter-hegemonic critique of mainstream media as suggested in Chapter 3. Regarding the first perspective, Ötekilerin Postası as a collaborative news network mostly shares the news, which other channels of alternative media prefer to foreground. However, a small portion of the news flows reveals similarity with the alternative media.

When the news sources of Ötekilerin Postası analysed, it is evident that there happens a convergence between forms of alternative media in Turkey including press and TV broadcasting. It is observed that alternative news websites such as www.sendika.org, www.bianet.org, www.kolektifler.net, www.evrensel.net,

haber.sol.por.tr, newspapers such as Birgün, Radikal, Yurt, Agos, alternative and left-leaning TV channels such as İMC TV, Hayat TV and Nuçe TV as a channel of Kurdish movement are among the sources through which followers are informed. Apart from these sources, Ötekilerin Postası utilizes the power of humour in raising awareness and shares various pieces of comics on the latest developments happened in the world and Turkey from popular magazines such as Uykusuz, Penguen, Leman and Gırgır. By embodying such a perspective, Ötekilerin Postası frees its followers from constant exposure and domination of leading social values and discourses. In this way, followers can have diverse and sometimes conflicting information about an issue or an incident fostering critical thinking and constant questioning which mainstream media does not promote. The diversity, heterogeneity of forms of expression and plurality of discourses, which Ötekilerin Postası welcomes, supplements the standardized and uni-directional information flow of mainstream media. Furthermore, through the alternative ways of news making such as citizen journalism and informing through humour, Ötekilerin Postası embodies less formal, less conceptual, alternative forms of expression and representation. The group also breaks the hegemony of Turkish language in public sphere by giving place to different languages such as Kurdish, Laz language. Thus, considering all these aspects, Ötekilerin Postası can be identified as an alternative media supplementing the mainstream media.

It is evident that mainstream media is utilized as an ideological state apparatus in order to maintain and strengthen the hegemony of state over society. For this purpose, dominant discourse reinforcing the legitimacy of state remains as the main objective which mainstream media conventionally follows. In this point, Ötekilerin Postası, which is composed mostly of counter-publics and sub-altern groups who are

otherised by the hegemonic practices and discourses of the state functions as an alternative media to mainstream media by giving opportunity to these groups for self-representation and expression indirectly challenging dominant discourses through experimentation and transformation of existing roles, routines, emblems and signs exemplified in comments and shares on women movement and LGBT people. For instance, through Ötekilerin Postası, followers are informed about the events, meetings and protests organized in offline domain to struggle against government policies such as in Uludere Massacre or murders of transsexual people which mainstream media tend to turn a blind eye.

As Uricchio (2004:151) states that “collaborative news networks have challenged the news industry on several fronts. They provide a seemingly viable model of an interest-based news community, one moreover, that makes use of low-cost distributed resources rather than high-cost centralized resources, and one that is largely de-hierarchized in terms of editorial authority and control, again in contrast to the elaborate hierarchies of most news organizations”. Therefore, Ötekilerin Postası as a collaborative news network favours a different version of ‘reality’ and ‘truth’ through counter-hegemonic and non-conformist discourses and representations. The followers are able to produce content and have it broadcasted through their comments and sharings resulted from citizen journalism, and they are also co-decide on policies regarding the organization of the group such as the policy to invent tactics against intervention of Facebook administration. Even though the interventions debilitate the organizational stability of the group foreseen as a threat, determination of the group wins out over. Moreover, Ötekilerin Postası is critical about capitalist mode of production, its principles and values as reflected in many comments and news such as anarchist bazaar and workers’ rights as opposed to

mainstream media, as a form of private-commercial media, having a well-structured financial organization. In other words, in terms of both content level and organizational level, Ötekilerin Postası as a collaborative news network can easily be identified as a media alternative to mainstream media.

5.4.2.3. Linking Ötekilerin Postası to Civil Society

As introduced in the previous chapters and sections, civil society has been a key element in late-modernity due to changing conceptions of citizenship and role of nation state in the globalized world and emergence of personalization of politics. While in early modern times, in Habermasian paradigm, civil society is defined as a part of private sphere which includes difference and conflict resulting from various identity-based problems which can not be the topics of public discussion, today, with the understanding that “private is political”, civil society welcomes all the issues and concerns to as issues of public debate and works in order to overcome the existing problems. In late-modern times governed by the third way politics, according to Giddens, due to high level of globalization and detraditionalization, states can no longer functions as an autonomous agent. Moreover, besides the necessary collaboration between civil society and state, governments should create open and transparent public sphere through which civil society can function effectively. Herein, reflexive citizenry as the agent in civil society in 21st century is the sole enforcer of the struggle for democratization of democracy. As Walzer (1998:140) remarks, “only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society; only a democratic society can sustain a democratic state”.

Civil society is generally defined by its organization around common concerns and interests through non-governmental institutions, which are nonviolent, self-

organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension, both with each other and with the governmental institutions that shape, constrict and enable their activities. In the light of this definition and revitalization of civil society in Turkey, *Ötekilerin Postası* as a form of alternative media reflects the concerns of Turkish civil society. Both Turkish civil society, especially after 1980s, and *Ötekilerin Postası* embodies a perspective that state's power and authority over society should be lessened and limited. Further, civic participation and democracy identified as the main objectives of civil society are reinforced by *Ötekilerin Postası*. Although through computer-mediated communication, *Ötekilerin Postası* encourages micro-politics through political participation and expression in virtual space, these practices are highly connected and reflected to 'real' space' as forms of macro-politics. Various meetings, protests and organizations happened in 'real space' publicized and supported by the group in order to voice and represent the demands and problems of different social segment within Turkish civil society. For this purpose, *Ötekilerin Postası* also functions as a civil society organization to be in solidarity with the disadvantaged groups in Turkish society by publicizing some campaigns such as "socks for children" and cry of a father whose daughter is a rape victim.

The most distinctive feature of *Ötekilerin Postası* to be identified as a form of civil society lies in the encouragement given to citizens to express themselves about the difficulties they face generated from the grand structure reinforced by concentrated power, namely the state. As Keane (1998:xviii) points out, civil society underlines "the importance of enabling groups and individuals freely within the law to define and express their various social identities and the impossibility of, especially in the era of computerised networks of communication media, of nurturing 'freedom of communication' without a plurality of variously sized non-state communication

media. But of special interest...is the subject of democracy or, more precisely, the intellectual and political need to revive the democratic imagination. ” Such an understanding and its emphasis on freedom of communication and democracy correspond to main objective of Ötekilerin Postası, and accordingly, followers share their various concerns, problems and demands from government through online discussions on group page regarding environmental concerns, anti-nuclear energy protests etc.

As opposed to the picture drawn by Giddens regarding the desired collaboration between government and civil society, the current AKP government have implemented some disciplinary and interventionist policies constricting and repressing both power and critical stance of Turkish civil society leading eventually to a social explosion as seen in Gezi Park protests. In this respect, Turkish politics is still ruled through a “we” and “them” politics based on dualities different from “left” and “right”. In this picture, statements coming from the government and especially the Prime Minister regarding the critical reactions of civil society such as “When did the boot get on the other foot?” have led a significant level of polarization in the Turkish society. The portion of civil society regarded as “them” and “others” by the government and repressed through violent means by police express their unrest through the virtual public sphere created by social media. While the expressive political participation experienced in virtual public sphere created in Facebook might enable a well-structured of social mobilization of non-conformist groups in Turkish civil society, it might also function as a safety valve preventing a more concentrated counter-hegemonic movement directed to the government. This picture is also valid for Ötekilerin Postası despite their challenging practice directed to dominant discourses and embodiment of counter-culture.

In response to a possible claim that since the group was mostly composed of citizens who are critical about and otherised by the government, it cannot represent the whole structure of Turkish civil society, the comments provided above reveals the conflictual environment and critical stance of followers resembling the dynamic nature of civil society composed of plurality, difference and opposition. On the contrary, with the existence of a constant conflict it inheres within itself and with the government, *Ötekilerin Postası* as an alternative media containing in itself a miniature version of civil society which can be regarded a third voice different from mainstream media and private commercial media.

5.4.2.4. *Ötekilerin Postası* as Rhizome

Bailey et al. defines alternative media as rhizome being non-linear, anarchic which enables insurgent politics. Moreover, with its spontaneity and nomadic nature, alternative media appears as a counter-hegemonic structure compared to arbolic organization embodied by state and mainstream media. With its emphasis on heterogeneity, plurality, contingency, fragmentation, and possibility of insurgent and anarchic politics, *Ötekilerin Postası* can be regarded as a form of alternative media having rhizomatic characteristics. Especially, the issues and events regarding the Kurdish movement have given way to insurgent political participation in the group. However, the principles of destabilization and deterritorialization which the rhizomatic media favour are not practiced in the group since followers, in general, have political identities based on an essentialist understandings formed as a counter discourse to the hegemonic one. Therefore, although after 1980s, Turkish political culture has leaned to consensual relationship between conflicting parties and softening of central political discourses, followers of *Ötekilerin Postası* still follow a political culture dominated by “friend” and “enemy” relationship enhanced and

intensified during the rule of AKP government. While the relationship at issue is expected to be seen among the followers having left-wing political view and Kurdish identity, the attitude and policies of AKP government have spread this relation to other social groups such as women, environmentalists. Thus, these social groups have tended to represent and express themselves through counter-hegemonic discourses and practices rather than be contended with destabilization and deterritorialization favoured by rhizomatic understanding of alternative media. In other words, otherised groups by AKP government has adhered more to their identities in such an unprecedented way and scale that their essential understanding of identity obliges them to produce an antithetical philosophy rather than mere deconstruction. In this way, even though followers are interested in many issues other than their primary object making them the other, political identification and process of 'becoming' are quiet parochially experienced by followers. Further, as opposed to the understanding introduced in Chapter 3, Ötekilerin Postası has not formed a relationship with state and market in any form let alone the one based on interplay between resistance and cooperation. On the contrary, the group has a quite problematic relationship with organs of state such as police.

Despite this limited practice of political identification compared to fixation and underestimation of deterritorialization, Ötekilerin Postası can be regarded as a rhizomatic media since it stands as the crossroad through which different social and political movements are supported in online and offline world such as struggles of rights and demands of various labour unions, protests against violence against women and the right to conscientious objection. Moreover, with the significant contribution of voluntary correspondents and citizen journalism, Ötekilerin Postası intensifies the form of nomadic and spontaneous communication. The group also

defines itself as an alternative communication medium promoting digital activism and electronic civil disobedience. In addition to these features, its non-linear and horizontal organizational structure paving the way for active and expressive political participation deepens the potential of Ötekilerin Postası for being regarded as a rhizomatic alternative media.

5.4.3. Ötekilerin Postası as an Instance of Alternative Media and its Potential for Democracy

The third way political programme suggested by Giddens as the most appropriate political form for the late-modern times in the Chapter 1, aims at adopting social democracy to changing features of the contemporary period. The new social democracy, which the third political programme is planned to form, favors reconciliation of individual freedom, personal choice and new forms of collectivity and solidarity. As explained and analyzed above, this project has been realized with facilities of social media and its potential for democratization via new forms of political participation and expression in the virtual public sphere. Moreover, computer-mediated communication does not only foster greater democratization of political participation in line with politicization of everyday life, but also paves the way democratization of communication through producing, consuming and distributing media content through different channels other than mainstream media. In this respect, alternative media, in this case Ötekilerin Postası, deepens democratization of information, expression and representation underlining relationality and contingency of production, distribution and consumption of media content. Following an alternative form of communication and functioning as a collaborative news network, Ötekilerin Postası reinforces followers' sense of

belonging to an identity and a new form of solidarity based on reconciliation of individual autonomy, reciprocity and interdependence between followers.

With these characteristics, Ötekilerin Postası as an alternative media operates in virtual space through which followers engage in various political activities corresponding different understandings of democracy in line with new conceptions of citizenship. As one of the new conceptions, cultural citizenship intends to eradicate the practices of domination and tries to gain recognition of difference on the basis of tolerance and mutual respect. Further, as Rosaldo indicates in Chapter 1, cultural citizenship defends the right to be different in terms of ethnicity, language, political view etc. and aims at expanding these rights through micro-politics practiced through tactical practices in public sphere and active participation. Being different and ‘other’, and challenging the conventional practices of domination has been the points followers of Ötekilerin Postası are proud of themselves as cultural citizens. Their active involvement in virtual public sphere and subversive, non-conformist and counter-hegemonic discourses, which they support, are in line with one of the promises given by third way political programme as forming cosmopolitan nationhood giving emphasis to cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Even though AKP government has launched a resolution process regarding the Kurdish movement, as it is seen in the comments related to the issue, followers belonging to Kurdish identity did not foresee any development regarding the construction of inclusive and reflexive national identity. In addition to Kurdish question, many social groups who are discontent with policies and attitudes AKP government such as women, university students and LGBT people and citizens, mainly having Kemalist ideology defend their right to be different in the current social and cultural climate in Turkey. These social groups complain about the state

interference in their social and cultural lives eradicating any possible seed of difference and plurality in public life, threatening secularism and making Turkish social structure standard and conservative. All these single-issue groups find a peculiar place in Ötekilerin Postası and practice sub-politics in the virtual public sphere.

Radical citizenship, another form of citizenship exists as an extension of radical and plural democracy. The radical citizenship refers to active citizen as a participant in a collective undertaking. As a project, radical and plural democracy favors the principles of pluralism, variety, heterogeneity on the basis of liberty and equality. It tries to overcome weaknesses of liberal democracy, which can only represent a minority of plurality, articulate universal with particular. Further, it defends the rights and freedoms of single-issue communities. Although it can be asserted that Ötekilerin Postası follows the philosophy of radical and plural democracy in principle, followers do not break ties with their essentialist understanding of identity. Therefore, although followers' comments reveal plurality of views and opinions conflicting with each other, dialogues usually ends with consensus in line with the dominant discourse supported by the followers on the particular issue and otherising and insulting non-conformist followers. Therefore, the claim of plural and radical democracy stating that the political should supposed to include complexity and plurality without final consensus has been invalidated by the practices of democracy performed in Ötekilerin Postası. In line with the search for consensus, the word "fascist" has been one of the mostly used word for othering among the followers and for the government observed in many issues/events such as Uludere Massacre, LGBT people and kissing protests and labour day. Moreover, some fractions are regarded as the authority in particular issues and the remaining group of

followers as outsiders of that issue/community. Therefore, their comments are thought to be one-sided and insufficient such as comments of non-Kurds in Kurdish identity-related issues and of Islamic women in women rights. Thus, it is evident that although *Ötekilerin Postası* has functioned as an alternative media promoting democratization of representation and expression of “others” in Turkey, followers of the group usually reproduce the discourses and practices of othering of which they are critical. As Mouffe (1993:6) indicates, “when there is a lack of democratic political struggles with which to identify, their place is taken by other forms of identification, of ethnic, nationalist or religious nature, and the opponent is defined in those terms too. In such conditions, the opponent cannot be perceived as an adversary to contend with, but only as an enemy to be destroyed.” As a reflection of this remark, since followers are not decentred subjects composed of diverse and ambigious subject positions as a result of non-essentialist political identification process, although they recognize various forms of difference and antagonisms, in the last instance, they seek for consensus rather than mere deterritorialization and defeat of the new “other” as enemy. Further, even though new form of solidarity based on reconciliation of individual autonomy, reciprocity and interdependence between followers and social responsibility for other are the constitutive elements of the group; mutual tolerance and respect are pursued to a very limited level. Moreover, a version of radical politics exercised within the group might be described as a replica of the offline political domain in terms of positing a new group of people as “others” including the group defined as “we” by the Prime Minister due to their closeness to neo-conservative wing. From all these respects, *Ötekilerin Postası* does not accomplish the promises of radical and plural democracy, and it almost reproduces conventional political patterns of the formal politics in Turkey, which cannot succeed

to bring a full democratic consolidation to the politics performed through alternative media operating in virtual space.

Even though *Ötekilerin Postası* does not fully accomplish the objectives of radical and plural democracy, it is a quite effective medium in which actualizing citizenship is intensively practiced. As discussed in Chapter 1, with the developments in new information and communications technologies and rise of mass self-communication, there has been a major transformation in the practices of especially younger citizens's political participation. Compared to dutiful citizenship practices including participating civic life through political parties with a sense of duty, today citizens tend to reveal actualizing citizenship practices stemming from more personally expressive cause-oriented politics. Actualizing citizenship deals much with concerns about lifestyle and life decisions giving way to protests, movements and struggles. In terms of this perspective, *Ötekilerin Postası* can be regarded as a locus of actualizing citizenship practices of 'others' through which they realize self-actualization through social expression. Including various single-issue communities and encouraging less formal and more direct forms of participation, *Ötekilerin Postası* as a network of interactive communication between its followers foster actualizing citizenship and democratization due to rising transparency between the borders of content consumption and production.

As the last point of reference, *Ötekilerin Postası* reveals a highly ambiguous picture in responding the objectives of dialogic democracy illustrated in Chapter 3. As distinct from liberal and deliberative democracy, dialogic democracy does not aim to reach a consensual consequence between conflicting ideas and interests. It utilizes dialogue as a mean and rejects any kind of fundamentalism. In this point, *Ötekilerin Postası* partly accords with the principles of dialogic democracy as it does with the

ones of radical and plural democracy. Even though the group puts dialogue as its constitutive element, followers have a tendency to reach an alternative version of consensus on the topic of discussion following a fundamentalist motivation only leaving a room for minimal variation. As mentioned in the proceeding sections, due to lack of fully transparent and open public sphere and a complete revitalization of civil society devoid of powerful state interference, Turkish citizens as ‘others’ exercise a form of democracy both partially dialogic, and plural and radical.

According to Giddens, democratization is transformed through major developments seen in late-modern period such as social reflexivity and detraditionalization and formal politics remains insufficient in responding demands of new conceptions of citizenship. Politicization of everyday life supplemented by life politics and identity politics challenges the authority and scope of both liberal and deliberative democracy. However, this fact is overlooked by AKP government especially during the Gezi Park protests. Taking its power from the regular elections in liberal democracy, the Prime Minister underlined the election results and stated that “We are hardly controlling fifty percent of Turkey”. Supported by almost the half of Turkish voters, AKP government suggests protestors to express their opinions in the coming regular elections. As exemplified in this case, since AKP government still thinks that political participation is only exercised through the representative mechanisms of liberal democracy and regular elections, the remaining practices of participation such as protests made by “marginals, çapullers” do not have any legitimacy. Further, these practices are regarded as conspiracies organized by opposition parties rather than expressions of an intensive social unrest such that as the Prime Minister declares “We are again living the conspiracies such as threatening and keeping the governments in the line as it is experienced in the past. The opposition which could

not succeed in elections fires street protests”. In line with this perspective, expressive political participation through social media is regarded as both a threat and a source of lies, which is invested with “ideological” implications.

In this context, Ötekilerin Postası as an alternative media fills the gap which formal politics and its representative mechanisms are incompetent in fostering and deepening democratization of expression and representation despite its existing threat, in a way, regarding totalitarian motivations of some fractions of its followers. It is clear that Turkish political system is still governed by a form of political understanding based on dualisms and discourses of othering despite the fact that they do not refer to ‘left’ and ‘right’ political leanings as it used to be. Moreover, Turkish politics is not mature enough to embody a political understanding resembling the third way political programme with its “problematic” political history. In such a political atmosphere, even though it does partially fulfill the objectives of radical and plural democracy, and dialogic democracy, by fostering a form of participatory democracy in virtual public sphere and expressive political participation, Ötekilerin Postası is still an instance of an alternative media, which democratizes democracy through social media in Turkey.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In late-modern period, as a space for political discussion public sphere has been freed from its institutional context and expanded more to field of communication with the developments in information and communication technologies. New and technological version of public sphere and computer-mediated communication have corresponded to new conceptions of citizenship and democracy in line with the transformations happened in cultural, social and political sphere. With various characteristics of the period such as globalization, detraditionalization and high level of self-reflexivity and changing political landscape, citizens of the 21st century have dealt with the politics of identity and life politics compared to emancipatory politics by focusing more on the issues of self-actualisation through social interaction. Responding to this trend, social media has been a meeting place for people engaging in social interaction for different purposes in virtual space. Despite the fact that social media has been utilized for various purposes, this thesis has studied the nature of political participation and expression through social media in Turkey over its potential for including forms of alternative media and democratizing democracy. For

this purpose, Ötekilerin Postası as the group functioning as a collaborative news network has been analyzed as an instance of alternative media operating in Facebook in terms of its potential for fostering and deepening od democracy.

Since our political conversations and engagement reflect the quality and nature of democracy we experience, forms of political participation and expression practised through the virtual public sphere provided by Facebook have been one of topics of analysis. It is concluded that while Facebook, as a form of virtual public sphere, encourages active political participation and oppositional or counter-hegemonic political expression, it has also carries a restrictive and disciplinary potential to prevent an open and transparent political discussion. Ötekilerin Postası, as a group having a follower profile composed of citizens who are otherised throughout Turkish modernization process and by AKP government, and named themselves as others has been banned to accession and completely a number of times closed by Facebook administration, which leads to be named as followers as “faşistbook (fascistbook)”. Via the group, followers, in general, have found the chance to raise their voice, and express and represent themselves following the principles of heterogeneity, plurality and difference in the styles, contributions and perspectives. However, these implementations have hindered democratization of expression and participation in content production, consumption and distribution.

Apart from this point, in this thesis, the group has been analysed as an instance of alternative media from a multi-theoretical perspective and illustrated a considerably complex picture in terms of its structure. As it is seen, Ötekilerin Postası has responded to the principles of various approaches to alternative media, and therefore, defining the group in terms of one approach will result in a fragmentary analysis.

As the last point, the relationship between new conceptions of citizenship and alternative democracies and the structure of political participation and expression has been the topic through which political conversations and sharings on the group are analyzed. It is seen that alternative democracies such as radical and plural democracy and dialogic democracy cannot be fully practiced by followers due to their incapability of engaging in a non-essentialist political identification process, their lack of mutual tolerance and respect as an extension of Turkish modernization process, and the otherising policies and attitude of AKP government, which reinforce further polarization between conflicting parties. Therefore, although social media, particularly Ötekilerin Postası, fosters a version of participatory democracy and democratization of information, expression and representation compared to representative liberal democracy, it fails completely fulfilling the objectives of alternatives democracies going hand in hand with alternative media.

A New Methodology

Studying practices of political conversations and sharings on SNSs such as Facebook requires the attentive observation of those conversations. Understanding the quality and the implications of those conversations have to be a new field for online social research, but until now, a comprehensive research methodology for online domain has not been proposed. The existing literature on online social research tries to utilize the traditional social methods to analyse online social environments. For this thesis, a new and reasonable methodology for studying political and social behaviors on social network sites has been invented by using a multiple methods approach. Termed online social observation and critical discourse analysis, the methodology enables the collection of data on both the interactions observed on social network sites and the collection of the posts and content under study. The methodology, then,

enables the collection and understanding of incredibly excessive amount of data only some of which are analysed as a result of data selection process. Due to its high level of sophistication, complexity, future studies should not only refine the methodology overall, but to tailor it to their own research needs.

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