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AXES CONCEPT OF DEMOCRATIC RETHINKING THE LOCAL MEDİA

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Abstract

In ideal democratic systems media organs that all scales from national to local take part in a central location in the formation of public opinion and ensuring the flow of information.

In the liberal pluralist paradigm media has been describe as a fourth power and which appeal to the eyes of masses is an essential point.

Organizations operating in the mass media, especially at the local level media is a capillaries of society. It takes a mission such as flow of information from the environment to center. Together with the spread of new communication Technologies local media improved.

People reach the news and informations faster and more efficiently. At the same time local media organs worked a public body. In this study, we argued wital missions of local media in context of democratic with current examples.

This study is based on scientific observations and reserched on the literature of local media outlets. Aim of this study is discussed with different perspective to contribution of local media organs to political, cultural and social structure.

Key words: *Democracy, media, Liberty of media, local media*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the democratic systems which mean the management of people, the media which are free of executive, legislative and judicial powers were defined as the fourth power which inspects the government on behalf of society in Liberal Theory attributes a critical role.

The critical theory regards media as an ideological tool of the government which was turned into a tool to produce consent by the government. Today, the monopolization among the media owners and the relationships between media and politics are the new objectives of the studies on media. Although it is generally accepted that media don't have a definite effect on groups, the power to determine the agenda gives media the potential of behaving on behalf of government (Elmas-Kurban, 2011, 62).

Thus, media is an institution which informs the society, notify them, enables an individual participate public on public matters and inspects the management on behalf of public.

Reasoning (freedom of press), state of law (human rights, independent judiciary) and political participation (the participation of the citizens, free elections and political parties are three indispensable parts for democracy. In this triple order, the free and independent media is the most significant necessity for the function of democracy (Bajohr, 2006, 177).

There are two components of the idea that free journalism is a necessity for democracy. The first one is media which functions as a supervisor over the government. No matter the media has a huge and

independent power, it functions as a fourth element which monitors the other elements of the government and inspects it.

The second is the obligatory status of media for citizens who may have information and be criticizing. Media provides knowledge and news related to basic events necessary for commonsense juridications of people. At the same time, it also functions as a forum through securing the access to various information which people exchange (O'Neill,1998,40-41).

There are three dimensions of journalism which makes iit the fourth power:

1- The people who rule the country and society through using the state mechanism can get the information about which country and society they are ruling only through a pluralistic media. When they fail in accessing such information, they can't be aware of social needs and thus, they can't establish democratic administrations.

2- It is only possible to determine what is the best and the most correct for a society through a press that functions as a media (environment) for an open discussion. Without a pluralistic media, it is impossible to conduct a pluralistic discussion.

3- The three powers of the democracy (executive, legislative and judicial powers) are the places where the relationships between the society and the state are determined. However, three of them function on behalf of the state and they always favor the state as a conclusion of their nature unless there is a pressure upon them. The media is the power of the society which inspects those three powers of the state and for that reason; it is the fourth power (Görmüş, 2012, www.taraf.com.tr).

The basic element in the perception of democratic law state is elections, but democracy doesn't only consist of elections. The notion that "The ballot box is the solution for all the problems" is a notion which may bring harmful results. In the developed democracies, it is accepted that the notion of democratic state can occur with the contributions of all the important social and political powers and this public task should continue even after the elections (İçel, 1998, 97). In the developed democracies, people tend to participate in taking a decision at every level of the daily life (Kışlalı, 1987, 248).

Shortly, healthily functioning demoracy is possible through a system which people continuously participate the decision process and kept all the necessary channels open related to it not through a perception that the demands of people are presented to the administrators only from elections to elections. One of those channels is the media. The field where polyphony, freedom of expressing thoughts and inspection of the administrators are all actualized. Media fulfills a public task through establishing a communication between the ruling and ruled parties and becomes the greatest supporter of other powers in protecting democracy and liberties.

If the public is correctly informed, pays attention to the experienced events and thus affects the decision mechanisms through effective attitudes (Selçuk, 2000, 53).

2. A GENERAL REVIEW

2.1. Democracy and Media

Democracy which means the sovereignty of public in lexical meaning institutionalizes the rules and principles including those which provide respect for individualism and which has turned into a minority. Thus, it is impossible to degrade it to the majority laws. Democracy compulsorily involves the rights of all kinds of minorities (this minority may include even a single individual) to exist and express oneself (Selçuk, 2006, 25).

Democratic management style is a political life style which provides the most borad liberties to numerous individuals, provides possible broadest diversity and protects.

In order to establish democracy; the state, the political society and civil society should be distinguished. If the state and political society are confused, the majority of the public interests conflict with the combining activities of the state. If political society and civil society are confused, it is not possible to envisage the political and legal sequence as a simple distribution of dominant economic interests. This confusion may only leave the responsibility to set up unity in the management of the society. Whatever the situation is, there is no place left for the democracy

Democracy lies on giving the individual and common liberty through social instituteions; it cannor exist without individual and common liberty, rulers-roled ones are deyetmined by the elections and maximum contribution is provided in the formation and development of social institutions (Touraine, 2004, 25-65).

Traditional liberal thought claims that major democratic role of media is to act as public watch (watchdog) which observes the state. This role, generally, is defined as revealing the misuse in the application of the state authority.

This observer role is said to come prior to other functions of media and determine the form of organization in media. It is claimed that complete freedom of media from government is only possible in free market rules. Whenever media is exposed to public regulations, it isn't an observer anymore and turns into a snarling dog in the service of the state (Curran, 1997, 142-143).

In Turkey, a journalist or an editor may have to change and give publishing due to orientations and pressures coming from inside or outside the media organization for news he produces/desires to produce (Alver, 2011, 445). Doing so, it neglects its role as an observer quits being an observer.

The media which stops being an observer is the state journalist. The necessities of state are at the forefront for the state journalist not social problems, demands and agonies of the society. State journalists are such journalists that their mission is to hit the society using envisagements and plans of the state related to the public not transfer the social demands from bottom (society) to the top (the state).

It is such a journalism that it tries to turn the ideas which state dislikes into "bogeys" instead of mediating the freely discussion of all the ideas in the society.

By its nature, such journalism hangs on the words of the state befor it makes news or interprets the developments which are of interest to the state and probably not liked by the state; then, it starts action in accordance wiğth the signals to come from the state…." (Görmüş, 2012, www.taraf.com.tr).

Bajohr (2006, 187) who reminds the statement of Bernard Tapie "Mostly, even the most clever and wise boss can be surrounded by the workers who may loose their spirit of objection and personality. Although theyknow their boss is completely wrong, they deliberately keep silent since they aren't encouraged"; has expressed the significance of free media for democracy with the sentences below:

"Free media organs always have to feel encouraged enough. Because, if they don't find the courage or start to loose their courage; you may feel suspicious abou democracy."

2.2.Monopolization:

As a result of interceptions, the majority of media organizations were combined to big companies under the control of finance and industrial capital. One of the results of this change in the ownership structure comes out in the form that media organizations, sometimes, avoid researching or criticizing the activities of the giant cartels they belong to.

The tradition of economy politics led by Schiller (1989), Herman and Chomsky (1988) claimed that the transformation in the ownership structure encouraged the confirmation of capital supporting expressions when media was combined with capitalism.

The changes in the ownership structure also affected the relationships between media and government. Some researchers (Chadwick, 1989) determine that media cartels are indeed power centers which exercise power in order to increase the profits of the company, medya (Curran, 1997, 146-149).

The media which grow and strengthen with the capital accumulation have started to stand against governments as the strong media. Thus, the media which is regarded as one of the powers in the system and has the duty of inspecting on the other powers gradually turned into the media of powers. Political powers established their own media in order not to fall into a decline against the power of media. Thus, media turned into the power of politics as well as capital (Güngör, 2011, 144-145).

In a system which the power of media is on debation, media ignores the impartiality in its broadcasting, news and programs are formed under the influence of definite powers (governmrnts, media owners, advertisers etc.). Thus, it turns into a power violates the democracy not protects it.

The model of monopolist mediai decreased the democratic participation and led the media violate its duties. The right of society to be informed was condemned to the inspection of a few monopolies. Media opened its pages and/or screens to declarations and shows of governing powers full of propaganda instead of reporting the demands of society to the owners of powers[1].

2.3.The future of written media

The current existence of printed media will move to the internet environment in the following decades. It is not a prophecy. To Vima, one of the leading newspapers in Greece, stopped its publication during the week and decided to continue on the internet. Newsweek, one of a weekly magazine in the USA, which has been distributed all over the world since 1933 stopped its life in the printed media with the last issue on December 31, 2012 and decided to maintain its publications on the digital environment (www.stargazete.com.tr). The printed media will loose its dominance and effect even it doesn't die out completely; the internet having everything more than printed media has will be substituted. The friendliness, free or very cheap access resulted in an increase in the people who follow media via internet up to hundred millions.

In Turkey, today, millions of people visit the websites of the newspaper with a few hundred thousand circulations. While the number of visitors who visit the internet sites of the printed media is expressed in millions; those who watch videos are expressed with hundred thousands and those who make comment are expressed in ten thousands.

The development in the communication technologies triggered the journalism for people. The pictures of crime scene which was hardly found in the past can be obtained from pictures of the individuals' mobile phones. Technically easy access to internet journalism led to birth and increase in the quantity of online newspapers and news portals.

[1] During the first days of Gezi Park events, common media organs which are afraid of government ignored the events, acted as if nothing had happened and played three monkeys by keeping silent. After the crowds who desire to get information about events and developments achieved news from virtual media and and uncommon media, they employed news and comments on their pages and screens related to the events.

While reanimation of direct democracy[2] is hoped along with internet, the symmetric communication form presented by internet may in sapproach the public area to the ideal of a assembly democracy which is open to all citizens (Tokgöz, 2008, 295-297).

3. LIBERTY OF MEDIA

Although liberty of expression forms the base of individual liberties, in practice, it has the character which is only valid with the libert of media. At the same time, it is also the basic requirement of media liberty.

Nowadays, the prevention of ideas and expressing ideas are contrary to the pluralistic concept in modern democracies and, especially, it is gradually getting impossible from the point of political authority. The communication opportunities which develop and rapidly progresses make numerous existing obstacles related to expressing and spreading thoughts void and meaningless (Selçuk, 1997, 246).

The core of liberty of press is the freedom of thought and speech. It is impossible to mention about the liberty of media and communication without the existence of freedom of individuals in expressing their thoughts in the form, time and place, discuss them and eve keep silent; namely, liberty of thought and speech (İçel, 1998, 21).

It is only possible to produce realistic solutions for public problems healthy discussion processes through the existence of correct information, free ciritics and valid opposition. If the dominant authority in a political system is public, there shouldn't be any authorities who prevent knowledge and thoughts in accessing it.

If public is correctly informed, they care about the experienced events and thus affect the decision mechanisms through maintaining an effective attitude; there is democracy (Selçuk, 2000, 53).

The notions that the liberty of expression and criticizing may destroy social values aren't on favor of democracy although they are within the limits of democratic criticism (Erdoğan, 2001, 9).

An independent and free media is assurance, basic source and sine qua non of developed democracies. At the same time, free and strong media and other elements of mass media are among the dispensable parts of a healthy democracy (Belsey, 1998, 19; Vural, 1996, 1055).

Beside liberty of public in accessing news, freely transmission of ideas and opinions; media has highly significant tasks such as molding public opinion, announcing the activities of governments, state institutions and organizations, inspect and criticize them on behalf of them. In order to do this, media should be free and independent. This is not only liberty of a journalist to express himself but also liberty of people to access news (Gezgin, www.konrad.org.tr, 2000, 165-166).

In order to enable individuals in the society use the liberty of expression, they should have the liberty of being seen and heard besides the liberty of seeing, listening and speaking (Fisher, 1984,19).

In order to secure the liberty of intercommunication on the global level, both global communication networks and the right of democraric access to is an obligatory (Belsey, 1998, 29).

[2] Direct democracy (classical democracy, participatory democracy) is based on direct, unmediated and continuous participation of citizens to the government matters. This way, direct democracy clears the discrimination between the ruling and ruled ones; it is an endemic self-governing syatem. The most modern example for it is plebiscites (Andrew Heywood, The Basic Terms of Politics, 2012, 171).

As a free society requires, one of the conditiond for birth is not being prohibited. The media cannot publish the ideas of everybody and it is not expected. However, huge media units, as a requirement of giving neutral neutral news and different from the function of they may and have to undertake the task of publishing contrary to their opinions (Sezer, 1972, 43).

The media is a tool which contributes to the declaration, announcement and spread of the opinions of various groups in the society through reflecting the opinion within itself and those belonging to the external environments; thus, provides an interaction between the rulers and ruled ones (Girgin, 2001, 144-145).

There is a continuous relationship and interaction between the rulers having the power and the ruled ones. The public emerges during the process of this mutual relationships and interactions.

First of all, individuals or groups should access information related to the problem and should discuss on it later on in order to form a public opinion. When a contentious problem occurs, the people related to it should get in touch with other groups in order to push the dominant opinions of the group or groups through and explain their ideas and opinions. Communication has a huge role in all those relationships. Mass communication tools which are regarded as one of the most effective elements in the formation of public opinion transfer information within this communication process (Gezgin, www.konrad.org.tr, 2000, 172-173).

In the multiparty systems, the diversity of comments is useful for the society. Because, the public which is fed with comments from numerous sources instead of a single sided comment will need to research the accuracy of the news and this will provide a progress for the development of the political system.

The governments should enable public getting information from numerous sources along with different and free comments and news.

4. LOCAL MEDIA

Local media undertakes a mission just like capillary vessels of the society in the flow of information which occurs from center to the environment, from environment to the center. With gradual spreading of newly communication technologies such as internet and satellite broadcasting; local media organs both transfer new and information to human beings faster and performs a more effective task as a public organ.

In Turkey, the local media which is called as Anatolian media or country media may provide significant contributions to the healthily formation of local public opinion, the spreading of democracy from local to general aspects, its internalization and its healthy operation.

On the base of saying Anatoian media to the local media, there is the ideal of uniting, integrative and in other words, there is national unity and solidarity which becomes concrete with the word Anatolian (Turan, 1992,92).

The pioneers of local media in Turkey are Vilayet (Province) newspapers. On November 7, 1864, the Ottoman who transform to provincial system from the state system encouraged the issue of newspapers in every province. Those newspapers not only published the official announcements but also employed the burocrats of the time who are intellectuals of that time as journalists and aouthors; issued publications related to the local problems and developments and made quotations from foreign newspapers.

Numerous definitions were made for the local media. Tütengil (1966,63) emphasized that Turkish media could be divided into two such as national media and regional media and defined the regional media as following:

"The regional media is newspapers which are prepared with local ideas and handcraft, give priority to the news and matters related to the environment and are distributed within a definite area."

The local media is written media organs in various parts of the country, especially, in the residential areas except big cities, in provinces, districts and small towns, with daily, weekly, or longer periods, speaks out news, events and problems of the region and aims to reflect the demands of public to the authorities (Ünal, 1996, 1068).

Local media is a mass communication tool or the combination of tools which carry out the publishing activities with the purpose of informing people of the region with limited borders and clearly defined (giving information), training, entertaining and free formation of public opinion in the region (Vural, 1999, 44).

Different from the national media, the local media is defined as the newspapers which are published and read in a limited area and employing local news and matters. The local media performs its public duty by helping the people in the region to solve their problems, positively contribute to the development of relations between individuals, contribute to the formation of local public opinion and inspect local administrations to some extent (Girgin, 2001, 161-162).

Local media is a media organ which focuses on the events in its region, tries effort for the development of the region (Faraç, http://www.jurnal.net, 2013),

These newspaper who undertake the mission of being a bridge between the state and citizens has some functions such as the inspection of public officers and official services, correct and relevant reflection of national will and establishment of necessary democracy culture (Gezgin,1998, 8-9; Faraç, http://www.jurnal.net, 2013).

Local media which had a narrow reader group and limited audience group at the beginning found an opportunity to address to a broader group thanks to the developments in technology and started to gain national and international dimensions.

Today, local media may reach to everybody all over the world who is interested in the region thanks to its internet pages. The same position is valid for radio and television enterprises after satellite broadcasting and the opportunities provided by internet.

With the enlargement of the network for transportation and access provided an overwhelming impression in a larger geographic area for a problem that seems local and small, readers/audiences easily submit their demands to the administrators.

Although the local media dominantly employs local news and cultural programs nowadays, its locality is only limited with their names and publication sites.

When we consider all of them, we need to redefine local media: Local media is the media organs which are prepared by local efforts, dominantly employ the news, problems and developments and cultural elements related to the region on their pages and screens, transmit local problems, the expectations and demands of local public.

5. CONCLUSION

If a democratic society is pluralist and polyphonic, local media is an important tool in providing pluralism. In order to fulfill this role of local media, a country should be democratic, namely, have the liberty of accessing news. The existence of an environment with freedom of thought which the journalists can benefit and the transportation of the events in the society in an attention drawing manner by the journalist who utilizes this freedom are necessary (Alemdar, 1992, 88-89).

The media with a monopolist structure which broadcasts in a manner protecting the benefits of the institutions they belong to makes the dominance on the news weaker and removes the convincing effects on groups. This situation increased the importance of local media which wasn't overtaken by definite groups or individuals belonging to the people with amateur spirit and provided new opportunities.

Local media may contribute to more healthily formation of public through opening its pages/screens to various political views, being more sensitive to the developments in the region than the common media, employ the response of public to the developments on its pages and screens.

In order to contribute the free formation of public opinion and by force of being a social state, the state should economically support local media institutions without applying any enforcements and forcings. In order to provide the contribution of local media institutions to the development of participant democracy, an important factor besides the governmental helps is the support of readers/audiences. There are tasks to be done by readers/audiences for the contribution of local media to democracy.

The profile of readers/audiences who leave the local media enterprises to tender mercies of only advertisers (in the example of Turkey, Press Association which distributes official advertisements by means of the state, public and private enterprises) is one of the most significant obstacles in front of the development of democracy culture. It is as important as the changes in the ownership structure of media. The readers/audiences who don't follow media, read newspapers, watch television and don't use the opportunity to give instant responses he captured thanks to technology have responsibilities in transformation of media into the voice of the power owners. Local public should be aware that the local media which will reach to high reader/audience quantitites is on their benefit. The number of readers/audiences that will reach to an indispensable level will enable them find places in the contents of media.

Moreover, local media institutions may only turn into a qualified, respected and effective newspaper and television so long as they are specific, the newspapers and television of the culture of their region and people of region (Vural 1992, 209).

Local media institutions will be able to exist and increase their effectiveness, so long as they remain in the local culture with the contribution of accessibility they have after the opportunities provided by technological development.

Since it isn't financially possible to compete with the media under the control of big goups through making publications similar to news and programs of the common media, they will be able to form awareness through considering their localities and employing things which they don't have on their pages. Local media will be able to establish a democratic thought platform through giving place for the diversities of the region they located, conflicting ideas on their pages/screen. So long as it succeeds, it will become an unseparable part and sine qua non of the democratic systems. With the opportunities of internet and satellite broadcasting, they will be able to compete with the media institutions under the control of giant capital groups.

Local media which may become the eye and ear of the public not the owners of power, along with non-governmental organizations, will become one of the most significant tools to include them into the process of decision making.

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