

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN NETWORK
SOCIETY:
THE CASES OF KADIKÖY AND ÜSKÜDAR MUNICIPALITIES

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ABSTRACT

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN NETWORK SOCIETY: THE CASES OF KADIKÖY AND ÜSKÜDAR MUNICIPALITIES

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Network Society is assumed to be more democratic and participatory. However, this assumption has come under critical scrutiny recently. Social media is one of the key arenas through which various groups and institutions share information and express opinions. Although it is not possible to think the social life without social media anymore, nevertheless whether such interactive fields are really democratic and effective means of communication is a question mark. This thesis problematizes civic engagement in local administrations by focusing on the Twitter usage of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipalities. The investigation conducted in this thesis has shown that current network relations with platforms such as Twitter is not based on trust which is essential for a democratic relationship. As a result of the content analysis on the tweets of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipality, features such as delegation of authority, online political polarization, lack of control mechanism of unanswered requests were found to be far from being based on trust. Based on these findings the thesis argues that local authorities should change their approach to Twitter from instrumental to communicative rationality. Likewise, there is also need for a third-party involvement which monitor the communications between local authorities and citizens.

Keywords: Kadıköy, Üsküdar, Public Sphere, Trust, Local Government, Social Media

ÖZ

AĞ TOPLUMUNDA YEREL YÖNETİMLER VE SİVİL KATILIM: KADIKÖY VE ÜSKÜDAR BELEDİYESİ

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Ağ Topluluğunun daha demokratik ve katılımcı olduğu varsayılmaktadır. Ancak, bu varsayım son zamanlarda eleştirel bir yaklaşımla ele alınmaktadır. Sosyal medya, çeşitli grupların ve yapıların bilgi paylaştığı ve görüşlerini ifade ettiği kilit alanlardan biridir. Artık sosyal medya olmadan sosyal hayatı düşünmek mümkün olmasa da, böyle etkileşimli alanların gerçekten demokratik ve etkili iletişim araçları olup olmadığı da bir soru işaretidir. Bu tez, Kadıköy ve Üsküdar Belediyelerinin Twitter kullanımına odaklanarak yerel yönetimlere sivil katılım sorununu ele almaktadır. Tez çalışmasında yapılan araştırmalar Twitter gibi platformlarla mevcut ağ ilişkilerinin demokratik bir ilişki için gerekli olan güvene dayanmadığını göstermiştir. Kadıköy ve Üsküdar Belediyesi'nin tweet'lerinde yapılan içerik analizleri sonucunda, yetki devri, çevrimiçi siyasi kutuplaşma, cevaplanmayan isteklerin kontrol mekanizmasındaki eksikliği gibi özelliklerin güvene dayalı yapıdan uzak olduğu tespit edildi. Bu bulgulara dayanarak tez, yerel otoritelerin Twitter yaklaşımlarını araçsaldan iletişimsel eylem kuramına dönüştürmeleri gerektiğini savunuyor. Aynı şekilde, yerel otoriteler ve yurttaşlar arasındaki iletişimi izleyen üçüncü taraf bir aktöre de ihtiyaç olduğu ortaya çıkıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadıköy, Üsküdar, Kamusal Mekan, Güven, Yerel Yönetimler, Sosyal Medya

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGARISM	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZ	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The Aim and Scope of the Research	4
1.2 Research Methodology	7
1.3 Structure of the Thesis	9
1.4 Limitations of the Research	10
2. CAN NETWORK SOCIETY BE A NEW PUBLIC SPHERE?	12
2.1 Civic Engagement and Effects of Social Media on Participation	12
2.2 Network Society and Information Age	15
2.2.1 Public Sphere and the Internet	18
2.2.2 Effects of the Internet on Democracy	20
2.2.3 Effects of Digital Authoritarianism on the Public Sphere	24
2.2.4 Inequalities to Access the Internet in Polarized Society	26
2.2.5 Digital Divides	29
2.3 Market, Hierarchy and Network	31
2.3.1 Trust Model of Community and Relation with Local Governments	36
3. LITERATURE AND DIFFERENT METHODS FOR ONLINE PARTICIPATION	41
3.1 Researches on Local Governments and Social Media	41
3.2 Different Methods for Online Participation	45
4. CASE STUDY: ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS BY USING TWITTER AND THE CHALLENGES: KADIKÖY AND ÜSKÜDAR MUNICIPALITIES	51
4.1 Introduction to Case Study	51

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Powell’s stylized comparison of forms of economic organization	33
Table 4.1 İstanbul district municipalities’ Twitter information	53
Table 4.2 Type of Media Shared by Municipalities by Months. NoT: Number of tweets.....	57
Table 4.3 Mayors of Kadıköy Municipality.....	61
Table 4.4 Mayors of Üsküdar Municipality.....	62
Table 4.5 Categories of tweets	66
Table 4.6 Most Engaged Tweets of Üsküdar Municipality	78
Table 4.7 Most engaged tweets of Kadıköy Municipality	79

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Internet and Social Media Use in Turkey	1
Figure 1.2 The Best Global Brands Ranking 2000-2018 (Source: Data Brand).....	2
Figure 1.3 Top Five Most Followed İstanbul District Municipalities.....	6
Figure 2.1 Tripartite Participation in the Networks Dijk	27
Figure 2.2 Individuals using the Internet (% of population)	30
Figure 4.1 Engagement of Municipalities Tweets	56
Figure 4.2 Engagements of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipality in 6 months.....	56
Figure 4.3 Geographical location of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipality	58
Figure 4.6 Categories of tweets/retweets of Kadıköy Municipality.....	67
Figure 4.7 Sub-categories of Event Category - Kadıköy Municipality.....	67
Figure 4.8 Categories of tweets/retweets of Üsküdar Municipality.....	68
Figures 4.9 Number of fav/retweets of categories	69
Figure 4.10 Sub-categories of “Promoting Municipality”	70
Figure 4.11 Sub- categories of dialogue - Kadıköy Municipality.....	72
Figure 4.12 Sub- categories of dialogue - Üsküdar Municipality	73
Figure 4.13 Echo-chambers among Turkish Twitter users	81
Figure 4.14 The results and suggestions to dialouge of Municipalities’ Twitter.....	92

Technology companies have found their place among the world's giant companies, and they have climbed to the top of the world economy in a short time. In the capitalist sense, the situation changed between the early 2000s and the late 2010s when strong actors of industrialization left their places to technology companies. In 2000, Coca Cola was the largest company in the world, followed by Microsoft, IBM, and Intel, but this did not last long. In 2018, Apple ranked first, followed by Google and Amazon (TheRankings, 2019).

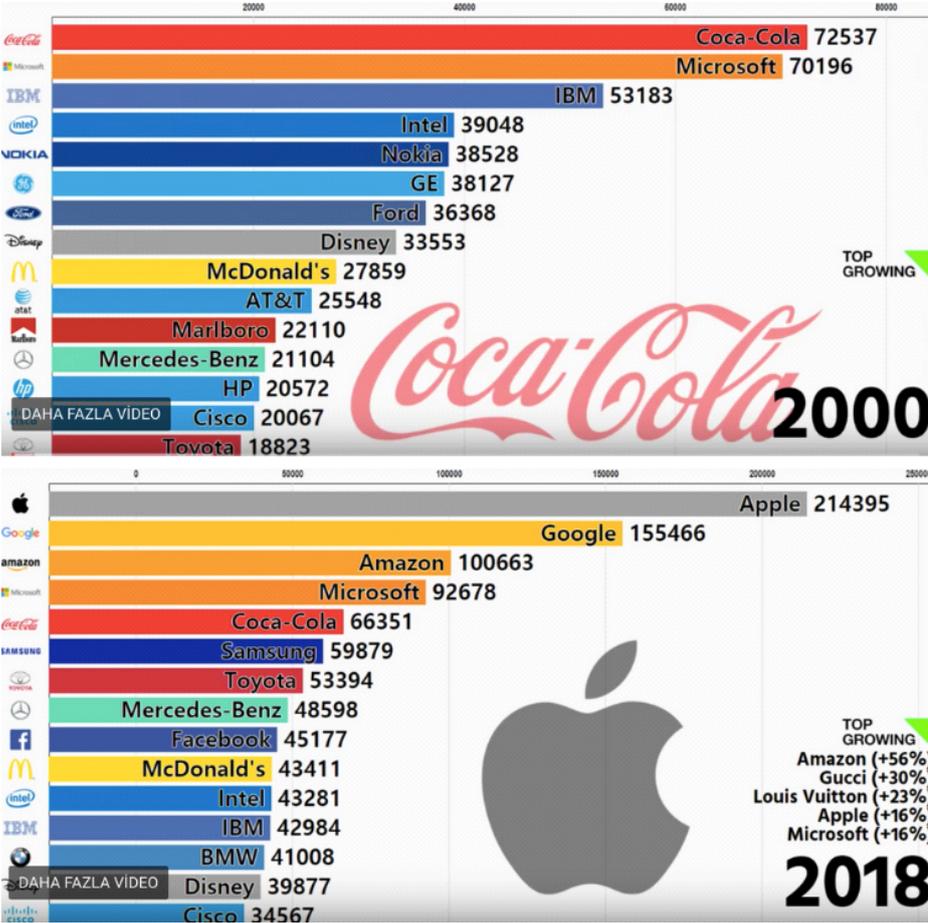


Figure 1.2 The Best Global Brands Ranking 2000-2018 (Source: Data Brand)

In the Information Age, when the relations of consumption and capital have been reshaped, the dominance of Internet and technology-based companies transformed the behavioral traces of individuals into a commodity and made people even more connected to these networks. Networks constitute the new social morphology of

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 provides the material basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure (Castells, 1998).

Therefore, the rise of the networks has immensely changed the communication practices between societies and individuals. Technology companies and social media platforms have sat at the center of democratic debates that could even influence elections. The fact that people with different social characteristics have the chance to come together through the Internet showed us that they need to talk about different social gatherings. Internet changed the limitations of time and space by speeding up the circulation of information as well as access to it.

The theoretical discussions about the Internet turning into a public sphere due to the conditions created by the Internet itself allows the public to make their voices more powerful. In a Habermasian sense, the idea of the public sphere is characterized by an environment where the access to public debate is free and open to everybody. Thus it is assumed that, all participants in public debate are considered as equal, no subjects and topics are excluded from the debate, the result of public deliberation is judged only on the basis of best arguments and the aim of the debate is consensus and unanimity (Jürgen Habermas, 1989). It has been an optimistic expectation by many the Internet could be a means of establishing a more democratic communication defended by Habermas. In public debates, the society can organize on the Internet, can be heard equally and freely, others do not determine the limits or rules of the discussion, and this shows that the discussion can include any subject. When all these definitions are taken into consideration, everyone thinks that the Internet provides these conditions and social media platform is successful in creating this public sphere.

With the increase in the usage of mobile devices, the ability to access to the Internet any time has become a useful tool for informing everyone about social events. The masses who performed protests for the democratic demands of the Arab Spring, which

started in 2010, or during Gezi Protests, protesters used social media effectively to create awareness about what was happening on the streets in 2013.

Social media tools that are thought to disperse this limitation can sometimes put pressure on public administrative or more generally, decision-makers. A discontent or lack of communication can necessitate another form of communication. This area is more open-ended and has different possibilities, and it brings with it the possibility of participation.

Thanks to the Internet that offers different possibilities of communication, local authorities have started to use such channels intensely. Media, such as Twitter, where everyone can be a part of the debate and freely convey their wishes, has become an instrument that can turn into an opportunity for local governments. It is expected that the impact of civic engagement will increase as local governments use the Internet and social media more actively. In the network society, the possibilities for a public sphere and more democratic dialogue are discussed.

The environment that emerged as the natural result of social media channels, whose limitations will be mentioned in the following parts of the thesis, has brought up other discussions. Because the use of social media tools in building citizen engagement and participation in local government are still in progress in terms of improving social media channels' effectiveness or finding the best online participation way for citizens.

In terms of civic engagement, it is essential to understand how media such as Twitter are used today and to determine whether it creates differences in local government policies. The Twitter platform, where politics is more talked about and it is easier to organize, continues to be seen as a part of participation for local governments.

1.1 The Aim and Scope of the Research

This study aims to analyze the way municipalities expand and sustain civic engagement using Twitter, and show the advantages and disadvantages of this so-

called “two-way communication.” To examine social media interactions, municipalities' usage of Twitter accounts were evaluated. The reason I chose Twitter as the platform is that this platform is open to interaction, has a higher chance of being anonymous, and political discussions are more common than other social media platforms.

Istanbul district municipalities were examined in this research. The metropolitan municipality of Istanbul was excluded because of the population and its impact. Among the social media accounts of the municipalities in the districts of Istanbul, municipalities with the highest number of followers and tweets and highest engagement rates were examined.

Istanbul is the most populous city in Turkey with 15,067,724 people according to TurkStat's data in 2017 (Governorate of İstanbul, 2019). İstanbul is more heterogeneous compared to many cities and as big as a country with a population of almost 16 million. Even if İstanbul cannot be considered as a global city in terms of its economic and cultural development, it can be regarded so in terms of its scale.

When looking at the district municipalities in Istanbul, there is one municipality without a Twitter account in 38 municipalities. Among the social media accounts of 37 municipalities in Istanbul, Kadıköy has the highest number of followers with more than 2 million followers.

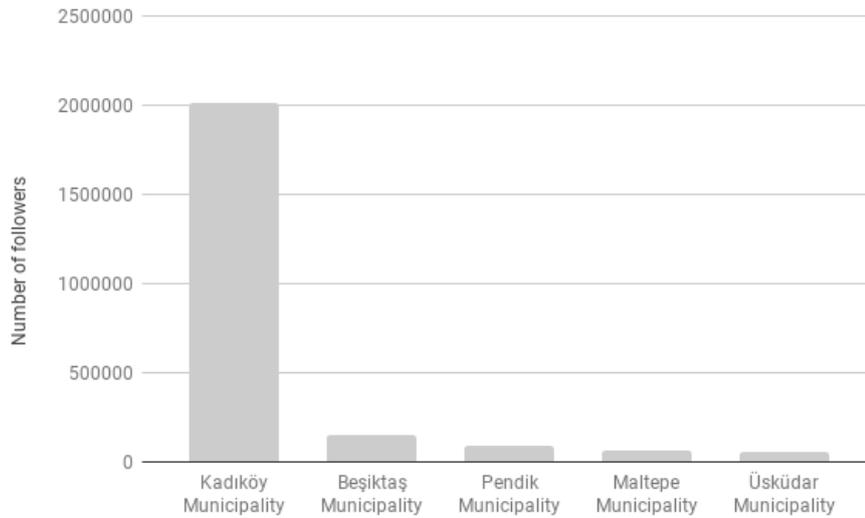


Figure 1.3 Top Five Most Followed İstanbul District Municipalities

In order to make sense of the strategies developed by the municipalities in terms of participation on Twitter and the results of the communication established, three fundamental questions were tried to be asked in the thesis;

- *How does the internet and social media platforms shape the public sphere and change civic engagement understanding on behalf of local governments?*
- *What are the differences and similarities between Üsküdar and Kadıköy municipalities regarding civic engagement on Twitter?*
- *Is Twitter a proper platform for local governments to communicate with citizens in two-way communication to sustain engagement?*

In the light of these questions, while trying to understand the differences and similarities in the use of Twitter by Kadıköy and Üsküdar municipalities, it will be observed whether it makes a difference in terms of civic engagement. It is necessary to discuss whether the communication established with the citizens is suitable for a pluralistic and participatory structure and how much local governments can develop trust relations within the network society.

1.2 Research Methodology

The units in the sample were chosen according to their characteristics in the universe, not accidentally and randomly. This type of sample is called a purposeful sample. The units to choose for the sample were determined accordingly. The clusters, groups and units that the researcher deemed appropriate were determined in accordance with the purpose of the research within multi method (Palinkas et al., 2015).

In-depth interviews were conducted with the Kadıköy Municipality social media officers managing the municipal accounts with the highest number of followers. During the interviews, they were asked what kind of social media strategy they followed, how they used social media, and their advantages and disadvantages. Four employees from the Social Media Unit of Kadıköy Municipality were interviewed. One of these employees was in charge of the social media unit and the other three people were the ones who shared and developed strategies in the social media unit.

The face-to-face interviews took more than 1 hour. A written request submitted to Üsküdar Municipality to conduct interview with the relevant social media personnel. Unfortunately Üsküdar Municipality did not reply the request during the period of time of writing of the thesis.

Besides, tweets of Kadıköy and Üsküdar municipalities were taken from Twitter API and categorized. Tweets were loaded with R and then examined. R is a free software environment for statistical computing and graphics. R packages help reach Twitter API and download specific accounts' tweets. Twitter account is needed to demand data from the Twitter API. To get specific tweets from specific Twitter accounts, you need to load the *twitterR* package in R Studio. The said information was then crosschecked with the tool named *Vicinitas* and total engagement data was received from this website. After getting data from municipalities' Twitter accounts, this data was transferred to Microsoft Excel to be analyzed more broadly.

In addition, tweets by Kadıköy Municipality's most followed account were examined in further detail. During this review, the categories of all tweets taken from the municipal Twitter accounts over the course of a month were determined. Responses to users from the municipality's Twitter account were also categorized. The aim was to put forward the data about the style of communication and how this would affect participation. One of the things that catches attention when looking at the social media accounts of the municipalities was that although the Üsküdar Municipality had the fifth highest number of followers, it was ranked first in terms of engagement rate. For this reason, all the tweets of Üsküdar Municipality during March were divided into categories and points that could compare with the Kadıköy Municipality. The differences between the tweets were discussed in terms of participation with content analysis.

In the first part of the research, a review will be made on the tweets and engagement of the municipalities. Afterwards, a quantitative content analysis of the tweets shared by the municipalities will be carried out.

Jensen says that content analysis and discourse analysis are used extensively in Internet studies. Content analysis means classifying and summarizing the verbal and written information for a specific purpose and categorize and measure certain concepts or variables by making preliminary studies. According to Neuendorf's definition, content analysis is a method of analyzing recorded texts and focuses on the information that the message includes, carries, and transmits. In broader terms, content analysis is an extensive range of applications for the description of human interactions, newspaper articles, television programs, characters in novels and films, the analysis of words used in political speeches (Bayraktutan et al., 2012).

For the quantitative content analysis of the Tweets to be examined in this thesis, the author of the thesis created codes by using similar academic studies. Although being coded by a single person constitutes an obstacle to the reliability test, it can be claimed that the professional and academic background of the author is suitable for this coding.

Coding was done in Microsoft Excel. The thematic categories and sub-categories of the thesis will be discussed in more detail in the case study section, Chapter 4.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. After the first chapter, where the aim and methodology are explained, the **second chapter** focuses on the relationship between civic engagement and democracy. The role of social media platforms is discussed in this chapter, where new methods are introduced to involve public participation in decision-making processes. Social media platforms are part of the network society, and the public sphere discussions of the Internet, and the reflection on participation issue has been brought to the forefront. In this context, the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet in increasing civic engagement as a public place are mentioned. The networks which are at the center of democratization and healthy communication are examined to understand the relations of trust with the chance of survival between the market and hierarchy. Trust is the cornerstone of community-based communication. The potentials of the trust-based relationship within the local governments and the network are examined.

Chapter 3 provides more detailed information on local governments and their use of social media. Academic researches on the use of social media by municipalities in Turkey highlight important points. Examples from different countries were also given to understand the similarities or differences with Turkey. The relationship between civic engagement and social media usage in different geographies has been examined. Finally, successful examples achieved with online participation tools are given.

Chapter 4 consists of a case study. In the Case Study section, the social media usage of two district municipalities in Istanbul was investigated in order to identify similarities and differences. In the context outlined in Chapter 2, it has been tried to determine how municipalities establish communication on social media and whether it is possible to talk about a communication based on trust. The limitations of social

media in terms of participation, especially on Twitter, have been approached from the axis of local governments.

Chapter 5 serves as conclusion by providing a summary of the case study and the conclusions that can be drawn from the theoretical and empirical discussions. In light of the findings an attempt was made to highlight the issues local governments can pay attention to in their future online communication with citizens in terms of participation.

1.4 Limitations of the Research

The user expression in the thesis has been chosen especially for those who use the Twitter platform. It can be said that expressions such as internet user and social media user are not clear about who these people are and what their characteristics are. It can be said that the expression of the citizen remains abstract, as this review, conducted through users of social media platforms, involves a study to understand citizens' participation behavior. However, it may be said that these conceptions are insufficient to express inequalities, abstraction may also be expressed as a necessity especially in the light of the available data for this research on social media. The difficulty of examining the class, ethnic, ideological identities of social media users comes to the forefront. There are shortcomings in specifying the details of who the users are.

Likewise, the engagement numbers of tweets expressed in the thesis cannot be said to be directly related to participation. Although metrics need to be taken into account in terms of communication-enhancing features in social media, it is difficult to mention that it has a full impact on civic engagement. In the following parts of the thesis, it will be stated that Twitter interaction has a detrimental effect from the pluralist approach.

It can be stated that the thesis has some deficiencies in terms of scale and technological limitations. Users responses to local governments help to understand the mood of the answers given through social media. A more detailed search on the answer given to the municipalities could also be one of the factors strengthening the thesis. The limitation is that the Twitter API sets a limit to extracting data from responses to a

Twitter account. This limit is primarily the time limit. People can only withdraw an account's responses to tweets posted within the last one week. The fact that the study covers one month creates a problem in terms of the sample. Twitter charges when requiring replies from the Twitter API more than one week.

CHAPTER 2

CAN NETWORK SOCIETY BE A NEW PUBLIC SPHERE?

2.1 Civic Engagement and Effects of Social Media on Participation

Globalization process have strengthened the decentralization as oppose to centralization tendencies of the so-called nation-state period. The new features of decentralization include being more participatory, more open to the local differences, more egalitarian, more flexible and effective in finding new solutions.

Democracy, openness, accountability, and transparency are among the governance principles (Şengül, 1999 Tekeli, 2004). In this way, beyond the exercise of the right to vote and to be elected, citizens can continuously influence, control, and have a say in government policies. Governance and participation terms bring the civic engagement definition into the discussions. It is debated whether the concept of civic engagement, which is the subject of this thesis, is successful in the context of local governments.

Adler and Goggin stated that there are different interpretations in the definition of civic engagement. The definition of civic engagement, which by its very nature is very broad, may include election, the most basic and straightforward condition of democracy, to assist or help neighbors on different subjects. However, in their final description, Adler and Goggin say, “*the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future.*” According to their article, the components shaping the community’s future are community service, collective action, and political involvement (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Cooper also says that citizen participation, which had a different structure several decades ago, has changed today and that there are many more initiatives. He describes this participation, which is more open to collaboration and deliberation, as follows: “*civic engagement to mean people*

participating together for deliberation and collective action within an array of interests, institutions, and networks, developing the civic identity, and involving people in governance processes.” (Cooper, 2005).

Macintosh emphasizes the importance of being informed within democratic political participation as well as the need to take part in decision-making processes and to influence policy agendas (Macintosh, 2004). Similarly, Arnstein also pays attention to the importance of information for public participation (Arnstein, 1969). One of the essential prerequisites for the participation to local governments is the necessity of informing them well. If a society is well-informed, they will expect more transparency and accountability from local governments.

Many academic researches and articles link the enhancement of democratic principles, such as transparency and accountability, in the context of citizen participation and citizen cooperation with public administration and empowerment. Another highlight of the transparency issue came from Kim, who states that local governments need to approach openness, integrity, and citizen empowerment to increase the level of transparency. To enhance the level of transparency and reduce the information gap between decision-makers and citizens, public officials care about openness while taking decisions and actions (Kim & Lee, 2017).

Today, the underlying condition of citizens being able to inform and communicate well with public administrations is to benefit from the networks and online habits that enter into people's lives. Forms of electronic participation (e-participation) applications, including online forums, virtual discussion rooms, electronic juries and electronic polls are important new technological ways to increase citizen participation (Macnamara, Sakinofsky, & Beattie, 2012).

The Internet, where political parties, civil society and the public can be found together with different power dynamics, is a chance to keep the government more accountable. Social media movements and reactions on the platforms forced governments to make statements and change their agenda. Social media and other online platforms have the

potential to improve engagement between citizens and government. *Social media tools allow for a paradigm shift in the citizen-government relationship from a topdown unidirectional approach to a more authentic two-way relationship that relies on the citizen's input* (Macnamara et al., 2012).

Moreover, using social media for civic engagement is a cost-effective and easy method for both governments and citizens. People who quickly logs in to their Facebook and Twitter accounts can look at the shares of the city they lives in, make comments and contact local government authorities without much effort. However, referring to a study conducted in 2012 in Florida to understand whether there would be a difference in quality in a public participation process on a website as a non-registered and registered user, Bryer says that there will be no easy access within a very high level of quality. Bryer defines this as a “*democracy bubble,*” *in which citizens who enter a participatory space expecting to engage meaningfully find that they cannot when the quality of their input is not useful for decision makers* (Bryer, 2013).

Getting in touch with citizens using social media is also more accessible and cost-effective for local governments such that they do not have to deal with a physical meeting location and similar expenses. However, social media also means a need for staff who can manage communication in these platforms.

While it is vital to place so much emphasis on online participation, it is clear that it should be compared with offline participation. Kim and Lee's work on Seoul tried to conclude by comparing the offline and online participation programs. Findings indicate that with offline programs the perception of transparency in local governments increases. Consequences have been reached that feed the perception of citizen monitoring in the traditional sense demanding openness of administrations. Another finding is that limitation of participation in online programs increases the perception of transparency. The main reasons for this underline that online participation tools are not yet mature enough and these channels are relatively newer (Kim & Lee, 2017). Lack of capacity also shows us that online methods of participation - although limited to demands for transparency - need to be further explored. However, the most

important thing that can be said in terms of offline and online gatherings is that the flow of information on online platforms has the potential to move to other channels. Offline encounters can accommodate certain, but not always, physical limitations. Communication, which is confined to a particular area, is not likely to jump and move to other areas as much as the online one. The open-ended conditions created by the Internet also increase external control and accountability.

Robins et al., working on web-based citizen participation, claim that Internet access can help lower barriers for citizen involvement and increase participation. Web-based approach help gathering information from different representative group with high-quality judgment (Robbins, Simonsen, & Feldman, 2008).

Details of online participation methods used by local governments to increase citizen engagement will be discussed later in the thesis. However, in order to understand the nature and forms of communication of social media, it is necessary to describe the network society and information age.

2.2 Network Society and Information Age

Since the emergence of the Internet, many things have been discussed in terms of their potential. One of the most prominent opinions was that it would be a more plural environment and increase participation. Web 1.0 was generally a set of static websites that did not provide interactive content. During this period, users visited the web sites, received the information they wanted to get and then left the site. In other words, there was no possibility of contributing to the content or producing original content.

Technologists and academics have demonstrated that the era of social media, mainly defined as Web 2.0, will change the known methods of communication. The most important thing that constitutes the new structure of the Internet is a form of user-generated content, and this can be used in many different ways in the social sense. User-generated content means the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users. Social Media is a group of Internet-based platforms

that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Kaplan and Haenlein describe the advantages of social media as a self-presentation and self-disclosure. Collaborative projects like Wikipedia create a user-based encyclopedia of the world in many different languages; blogs give people the chance to write and share their ideas without the need for any publisher; content communities like Flickr and YouTube offer a place to share media content freely with other people; social network websites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are based on the social interaction among people. All these different ways of expressing one's self help people integrate and find a place for themselves in their own identity. Similarly, Tim O'Reilly defined Web 2.0 as a global brain, and James Suriowecki called it "the wisdom of the crowds." It changes the information process, but most importantly, it changes business models (O'Reilly, 2005).

The twenty-first century will be marked by the completion of a global information superhighway, and by mobile telecommunication and computing power, thus decentralizing and diffusing the power of information, delivering the promise of multimedia, and enhancing the joy of interactive communication. Electronic communication networks will constitute the backbone of our lives.

said Manuel Castell in his book *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture* in 1998. More than 20 years later, people started living the times Castells had foreseen in his book and networks have become the backbone of our lives. The increase in the number of people accessing the Internet has increased dramatically, and the increase in our Internet-based actions has brought about different discussions. What Castells calls network society is "whose social structure is made up of networks powered by micro-electronics-based information and communications technologies." (Castells, 1998).

Of course, Manuel Castells was not the only one who described the current era as a network society. The Internet and social networks, which have become a component of our life in doing most of our day-to-day job, have also created the basis of communication. For this reason, the 21st century is described by many as "the age of networks."

In his book “The Network Society”, Jan Van Dijk defines the network society as a concept that emphasizes the form and organization of information processing and exchange. Network society, described as social formations that connect each unit in different layers of society day by day thanks to infrastructures, has become a necessity due to the impact of the Internet on our lives even if it is not a new concept (Van Dijk, 2012).

Dijk describes the hierarchical and heterarchical forms of organization by stating that it is necessary to analyze the network layers within the society in order to understand the network society. In a heterarchical organization, the lower levels are partially in contact with the upper levels. Dijk says that, for the first time in history, we have the Internet as a means of communication give chance to connects hierarchical and heterarchical levels simultaneously.

Dijk also states that the Web has seven laws to understand the structural characteristics of networks. These seven laws were first suggested by Bernardo A. Huberman in 2001. The laws he describes help us understand the mechanisms within the network community and to make sense of observations on the Internet. 1) The first of these laws is “the law of network articulation,” in which network relations are becoming more critical than units or nodes to which they connect. 2) The law of network externality: Networks also have an impact on people and things outside the network. The more people join a network, the higher the likelihood of more people joining the network, meaning that individuals are attracted to each other and want to be part of a network. Being part of the network occasionally occurs through positive pressure and negative pressure. Being in a network where everyone can reach each other also has an effect that makes people's lives easier. 3) Although it appears to be contradictory to the previous rule, according to the law of network extension, the networks become excessively large as they expand, which causes the units within the networks to become invisible. In order to cope with this extension, intermediaries help. Networks intermediaries are search engines, portals and social networking sites. Individuals become more confined to these mediators as the network expands. It is now impossible for him/her to shop online and obtain information without intermediaries. 4) The law

of small worlds tells us that non-neighboring units are grouped in such a way that they can form clusters connected by strong bonds. 5) According to the law of the limits to attention, everyone in a network actually has the chance to reach everyone and every piece of information. They can access and consume more information, having less time fewer users become readers due to increased number of content producers. Dijk recalls that the sending is unlimited, but attention is limited. In other words, although people have equal chances to reach every information on the Internet, in practice, there is a low chance of reaching an equal number of viewers. 6) The power law in networks: Those with many connections make more connections, and this creates an imbalance. The popular ones continue to be popular, and this power is at risk of imbalance in having a right to speak. 7) The law of trend amplification: Networks are relational structures that strengthen existing social and structural trends. Noting that the impact of the Internet on society is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, Dijk emphasizes that there are many conditions that networks reinforce existing structures of society (Van Dijk, 2012).

2.2.1 Public Sphere and the Internet

These networks, especially social media platforms, that connect us and strengthen existing structures, are mostly mentioned in the public sphere discussion. The Internet is particularly associated with Jürgen Habermas' idea of the “public sphere,” a “network for communicating information and points of view,” where citizens in a republic can express their opinions, and deliberate and formulate some common view or “will.” Habermas states in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* that the public sphere emerged in French salons, British coffee houses, and German reading societies (Keane, 2018). Those who came together in the 18th century were able to express their ideas about discussing public matters and even engage in intellectual activity by also having the chance to publish them. Habermas' definition of the ideal public sphere refers to the bourgeois public sphere during that period. Capitalism and the emergence of mass media as a result of technological advancement also accompany this debate. However, the public sphere has lost its impact with the further growth of capitalism and the imposition of its laws. With the Internet, different

public sphere discussions have emerged again. The bourgeois public spheres mentioned in Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* can be replaced by virtual and imaginary communities connected to networks in modern society. Moreover, this communication creates new spaces for gatherings. Time and space concepts may be redefined in the information age. The fact that people with different social characteristics have the chance to come together through the internet showed us that people need to talk about different social gatherings (Anderson, 2006). Internet change the limitations of time and space. The divide between the private and public space is getting blurred.

Dijk speaks of fictitious public sphere boundaries that have faded in modern society. (p.265) News becomes private by entering homes and mobile phones, while private lives become public with social media channels. Interconnected and overlapping public spaces began to appear in more complex ways. Dijk compares the old and new public sphere as follows:

We will get a new type of social cohesion and public sphere with contours we cannot exactly anticipate yet. What we do know, however, is that the imagined unity of modern public spheres will transform into much more complex and differentiated unities. The public-private distinction may blur, but it will not vanish. New distinctions will be negotiated in struggles for privacy and personal autonomy, for more public or more private, market-based information supply, and for the soul of the family and spheres of living and working. Finally, public communication will be less tied to the parameters of time, place and territory than ever before. But this does not mean that the physical, social and mental make-up of the people engaged, and the material environment of the resources used in this type of communication will no longer matter.

Internet debates turning into a public sphere discussion due to the circumstances produced by the Internet itself allowed people to make their voices heard. In a Habermasian sense, the idea of the public sphere is characterized by that the access to public debate is free and open to everybody, all participants in public debate are considered as equal, no subjects and topics are excluded from the debate, the result of the public deliberation is judged only on the basis of best arguments, the aim of the debate is consensus and unanimity (Jurgen Habermas, 1991).

In addition to providing an egalitarian structure as the Internet is open to everyone, it also has a collective structure. Timisi, quoted from Fernback, states that he interprets group consciousness as one of the constituent elements of the Internet community as a collective soul. This collectivity should be sought not in the content of messages on the Internet but in an egalitarian and democratic understanding of the use of the Internet (Timisi, 2003).

2.2.2 Effects of the Internet on Democracy

At the heart of Habermas' public sphere lies the idea that the Internet creates a democratic environment. The perception that the Internet helps more people to participate in democratic processes has gained strength. Internet and social media are consent-based collective spaces and open to different social gatherings, which complies with principles of pluralistic perspectives of democracy.

Margetts states that the political scientists studying the Internet and democracy are grouped under three headings. These are republicanism, pluralism, and cosmopolitanism. Republicanism is mainly addressed in the Habermasian framework, while pluralism is addressed in the framework drawn by Bruce Bimber (Bimber, 1998). Finally, explaining cosmopolitanism, Margetts emphasizes the concept of globalizing internet, which claim that all people are a single community even if they are from different nations. Margetts also cites the Cyber Party, stating that the link between the Internet and democracy can deepen. There is even a political party which allows online participation (Margetts, 2013).

The Internet is inevitably a suitable environment for creating different communities while there is a necessity for different discussions in terms of participation and democracy. In the Virtual Communities, Howard Rheingold marked the tone of the debate by strongly arguing for the birth of a new form of community, bringing people together on-line around shared values and interests. Rheingold's virtual community is an interactive, communicative network based on shared interests, and he claims that communication sometimes becomes a goal in itself (Rheingold, 1993).

These spatial encounters with the Net enabled individuals with online access to interact with the people they live with. Cities are typically characterized by diversity along nearly almost every social axis: race, class, religion, sexuality, education, political ideology. The structure of the discriminative characteristics of cities might be overcome by coming together in different social networks. Individuals who do not have the chance to meet face to face will have the chance to meet each other in these online spaces. The chance to hear each other's thoughts, to listen, and to justify even if people do not agree may start new conversations, which may open the door to a communicative path to democracy.

Hauge and Loader thought that the internet would develop the structure of representative democracy by introducing the concept of digital democracy. It is possible to talk about a new democracy with interactive media. Characteristics of this democracy include interactivity, global network, free speech, free association, construction and dissemination of information, challenging professional and official perspective and breakdown of national-state identity (Hague & Loader, 2002).

Thanks to being a representative, the Internet gave people the right to free speech in many different geographies during social breaks. Different groups, who had the chance to express their thoughts freely, were able to make use of the space created by digital democracy.

The masses who performed protests for the democratic demands of the Arab Spring, which started in 2010, had the chance to let the world know what happened by taking videos and photographs with their mobile devices and sharing them on social media platforms. At first, they could barely find any place for themselves in the traditional media to make their voices heard. The world started to pay attention to the uprising only after the protestors started using the social media more. Likewise, during the Gezi Protests in Turkey, protestors used social media effectively to create awareness about what was happening on the streets in 2013. Protests spread to the whole country in a short period, and actions were taken against the demands of democracy for almost a month. This kind of platform has become a unique opportunity to inform the rest of the society. Demonstrators facing intense police violence in Istanbul preferred Twitter

to warn each other, communicate, and announce what was happening to the world. Major media outlets' failure to cover the protests drew huge criticism, leading to a widespread distrust in the media, which still persists. During the Gezi protests, Twitter created a unique language and strengthened social values such as solidarity and participation (Haciyakupoglu & Zhang, 2015). It also created opportunities for individuals to express their demands for democracy before the government. These actions, which strengthened the debate on public space, helped social media and the Internet reach the democratic demands of the masses during periods of media censorship or self-censorship.

The use of the Internet to provide social justice is based on the first periods of its emergence. During the Chinese Government's confrontation with students in Tiananmen Square in 1989, Chinese students created international public opinion and enabled information flow through computer networks. In the face of this, the Chinese government cut off telephone connections and blocked communication. Another example given by Timisi is the movement initiated by the Zapatista movement in Mexico over the internet. Thanks to the internet communication network LaNeta, they were able to announce themselves and their ideology to the world (Timisi, 2003).

The Internet also enabled users to participate in policy-making processes, led to a closer follow-up on the elections, and also helped citizens learn more about political leaders. Politicians, who had the potential to gain voter support, but could not find a place in the existing media environment, came to these alternative public spheres and had the chance to contact citizens. Internet and social media platforms, which also allow voters to communicate with the actors whom they want to see as their representatives, have been found to affect the decision-making of the masses in a short time. During the 2008 US presidential election, Barack Obama was able to influence the masses by running a robust social media campaign. In their research about the 2008 election, which resulted in the victory of Barack Obama who is "first social media president", Emily and Albert mention the power of social media in introducing stories to the public consciousness and successfully making journalists or media focus on

what they want. Besides, social media also have the ability to influence democratic discourse among citizens (Metzgar & Maruggi, 2009).

Different parties can make conversation, and everyone can participate in equal communication is the basis of the idea of public sphere. However, for a plural and participatory dialogue, there must be a two-way communication. One-way communication is a one-way flow of information in the citizen's relationship with the local government. In other words, it is a form of communication in which the citizen is not a part of the processes, does not interact with the local government, and instead make unilateral complaints and requests. The most commonly used ways of communication include being informed by the local government about the works done and the events organized, and making requests and complaints. The biggest problem in one-way communication is that it prevents the development of the sense of participation. The citizens consider themselves effective only in the voting process, but have difficulty in displaying any other meaningful participation.

In order to consider the relationship between government and citizen, it must be based on effective communication. Shark sees the main features of engagements as “creating meaningful dialogue,” “two-way communications” and “meaningful participation” (Shark, 2015).

Lisa Mahajan-Cusac, quoting Lee, Neeley, and Stewart (Lee, Neeley, & Stewart, 2011) explains why social media tools are essential for governmental organizations. According to her, there are four reasons for using social media for external communication: domination of the everyday activity, educating and informing citizens, accountability for the citizens, and evolving within the new technologies for two-way communication strategies (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016).

Habermas emphasized the conditions of dialogue to make possible the equal chances to start a conversation, approach with different perspectives and discuss ideas. All participants should accept that any coercion, accidental or systematic, will not be

included in the discussion, and they will have equal opportunity to express their feelings, attitudes and intentions (Köseoğlu & Köker, 2014).

However, where the same conditions are accepted, a communicative dialogue can be mentioned and open to participation. This two-way form of communication that can nurture participation is at the heart of democracy. Factors that limit communication and disengage from participation should be addressed when discussing the democratic structure of the Internet. Of course, censorship is one of the leading ones.

2.2.3 Effects of Digital Authoritarianism on the Public Sphere

Even if people assume that the Internet will promote democracy, it will create certain limitations in networks which governments can control and influence. The social and political use of the Internet also hints at the extent to which democracy can expand. Freedom and censorship of the Internet should be evaluated within the public sphere. Describing the power of authoritarian governments in controlling the Internet, Morozov says that these governments can use these tools for observation, gain ingenuity in censorship, and find ways to turn these networks into their propaganda tools. Even Morozov argues that the democratizing potential of the Internet is a myth. Authoritarian governments such as Iran and China use the Internet, where they have the chance to spread their propaganda and to observe the society, and citizens do not see the Internet as a policy space and become individuals who become passive in the entertaining world of the Internet environment (Morozov, 2011).

Many studies make similar inferences about how authoritarian governments have control over the Internet poses a threat to democracy. It is also underlined that the Internet had become a monitoring and surveillance tool by the states (Deibert, 2013; Fuchs, 2013).

The state turned the Internet into a surveillance tool, which is open to everyone, for propaganda purposes as well. Additionally, pluralism turns into populism on the Internet when analyzing the challenges of being online. New forms of communication,

which appear to be inclusive in all senses, and the media environment on which it is based, does not only bring about possibilities, but also a limitation. Individuals are open to the direction of the nature of the Internet, which they think is freely part of it.

As mentioned above, it is inevitable for the Internet to face censorship and accessibility problems in the countries which are authoritarian. Despite the potential to be controlled due to high levels of Internet usage in weaker countries such as Turkey, it should be examined in the democratic sense. Even if 72 percent of the society uses the internet, it is difficult to say that the Internet can be free and democratic. Shutting down of an online news site, arresting people because of their social media posts, banning Wikipedia for more than two years are among the obstacles before a free and democratic Internet in Turkey. Internet censorship mechanisms in Turkey increase steadily (Phippen, 2017).

According to Freedom House's annual report on Internet freedom, Turkey is ranked in the category of "not free." In the report published in 2018, countries are evaluated over 100 points under different headings such as sanctions imposed by governments and accessibility. Sitting at the 12th place with 66 points among 65 countries, Turkey is one of the countries where Internet is considered to be "not free". (FreedomHouse, 2019).

The report mentions the negative impact of authoritarianism on the Internet with increasing scores of Turkey. *"Social media companies were left with no choice but to censor nonviolent political commentary as a condition of doing business in the country, while Wikipedia was blocked entirely for failing to comply with the government's heavy-handed orders."*

Especially after the July 15 coup attempt, the number of people arrested because of the posts they shared on social media has increased significantly (Anadolu Ajansı, 2018). Twitter has created a different type of communication, but the number of those arrested for insulting the presidency with their tweets is quite high, and at this point, Twitter

can give these users' information to governments. To a large extent, company does not resist much to protect users.

In the sense of participation, promising platforms such as Twitter during the Gezi protests have been on the rise. However, this platform also used as a profiling tool in a short time, and it deepen polarization. The government found a way to intimidate anyone who opposed them on these platforms. Users, who had the chance to remain anonymous on social media such as Twitter, continued to exist until they felt the pressure. On the other hand, this anonymity reduced the responsibility considerably so that dialogue and communication became difficult. The users concentrated on using the platform to strengthen their ideological position by hiding behind their anonymity. It reflected the general form of the political blocks of Turkey's ruling and opposition parties and sharpening, and deepening polarization has also spread to the Internet.

2.2.4 Inequalities to Access the Internet in Polarized Society

Although the Internet is said to have created different spaces, where everyone can declare their opinion, it also has barriers by nature. In general, a public space can result from the fact that the negotiating environment cannot be established as desired. Individuals are always ready to communicate with those who are close to their views. The reason why communication is not always healthy is that it is open to polarization. The implications of political polarization in a society, like it is the case in Turkey, are also clearly visible on the Internet. Individuals may be quite far from Habermas' bargaining processes (Warren & Mansbridge, 2013). It is also imperative to talk about the barriers of the Internet environment to determine the agenda and increase participation in particular issues.

When looking at the political profiles of Internet users, it is possible to say that polarization already exists. Only the internet users who see, watch and read what their respective ghettos believe cannot realize that they are experiencing a different reality than the existing social reality. Especially Twitter is a place that is taken seriously by everyone. Politicians and administrative respond to each other on this platform, and

the emergence of some social events from here can prevent the limitation of discussions.

The lack of equal participation in network societies is also at the heart of the events, as mentioned above. It is a fact that social media platforms like Twitter are an appropriate space to react to critical social problems in Turkey. However, it is difficult to say that Twitter represents all segments of the society. Dijk's tripartite participation scheme in the network community also helps explain this (Van Dijk, 2012).

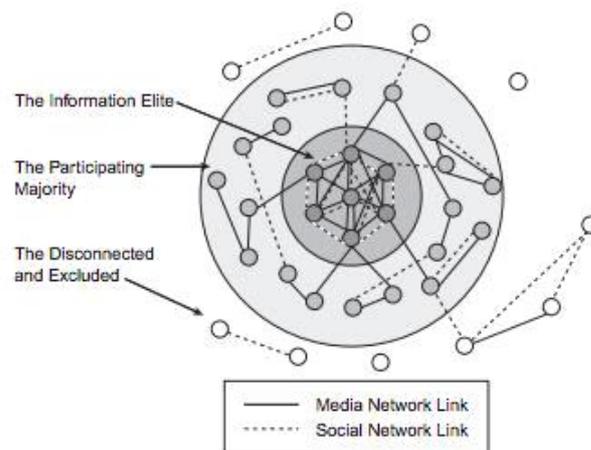


Figure 2.1 Tripartite Participation in the Networks Dijk

According to Dijk's tripartite participation, information elites are at the center of the network community. From a Twitter point of view, these elites can be described as new types of multi-follower gatekeepers. When they raise a topic on social media, they have the chance to engage a broad audience.

However, it is unclear who will be popular in networks, especially on platforms such as Twitter. It does not depend on people's use of platforms in a more democratic, participatory way and the use of two-way communication. Today, information elites, which are described as influencers and have capacities such as agenda- and trend-setting, do not need to be politically democratic or egalitarian. These actors often

interact by sharing information that polarizes society and has the potential to form small groups. This interaction continues with the same method.

Polarized groups are less likely to listen to each other and create an environment of democratic exchange of information. While the nature of the Internet through algorithms does not allow it, the chance of those, who are part of networks, to participate equally and with the desire to make their voice heard gradually decreases. The research conducted by KONDA is significant in this sense. As a research and consultancy company, KONDA is an organization that produces information on the most fundamental basis and interprets this information to make it meaningful. According to KONDA reports dated May 2018, there are differences between Internet usage habits of voters of different parties in Turkey (KONDA, 2019).

The report reveals that 36% of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) voters never access the Internet while the average ratio of voters across Turkey who never accessed the Internet was 29% in 2017, meaning that internet usage among JDP voters is below the country average. 8% of JDP users say that although they access the Internet, they are not social media users. 44% of all JDP voters use Facebook. 13% use Twitter, 43% use WhatsApp, 22% use YouTube, and 24% use Instagram. Country-wide usage ratios for these social media platforms are 51% for Facebook, 20% for Twitter, 50% for WhatsApp, 31% for YouTube and 28% for Instagram.

The majority of JDP voters do not find it annoying and/or they approve that the state restricts access to the Internet and various social media channels from time to time. Only one-fifth of JDP voters stated that they were uncomfortable with these restrictions. However, almost half of the voters in Turkey say that these restrictions are disturbing.

Main opposition Republican People's Party (RPP) voters use social media at a percentage above the country average. The report shows that 24% of RPP voters and 31% of all voters never accessed the Internet. Facebook is the most preferred social media platform among RPP voters with 60 percent, followed by WhatsApp with 54%

and Instagram with 36%. These rates are higher than the country average (KONDA, 2019).

Internet usage by party shows that everyone in Turkey does not have the same motivation to go online and the same level of Internet access because of certain political reasons. The most understandable reason of this is that the opposition groups do not have a space where they can make their voice heard and that the news and information channels are biased. Unable to find a place in traditional channels, the opposition has become a part of the Internet and network society, which they consider as an alternative. Therefore, they are inevitably more active users.

2.2.5 Digital Divides

One concept from KONDA's report that must be kept in mind is digital divides. Digital divides describe the gap between those with and without access to the Internet. Dijk examines the digital divide in four groups within the new media: motivation, material or physical access, skills, and usage (Van Dijk, 2012). There are different reasons why the society accesses Internet unequally. These may not be merely a lack of financial resources. The individual may not have the time to use the new media or may not have sufficient technological knowledge and digital media literacy. Another reason is cultural resources, meaning that people may not have enough cultural motivation to access the Internet and these networks. All of these are among the reasons for uneven access. This difference in access levels should always be kept in mind when considering public sphere discussions.

Norris stated that the diffusion of the Internet has contradictions in many different parts of the world. In his book, he compared the use of the Internet in countries and stressed that there are inequalities in access between countries. He pointed to the global inequalities in this area and underlined that this is different in the rich and developing nations. Norris even compared the old media index and the information society index to see if there was a difference between the two. However, what is interesting is that the traditional mass media can also reach wealthier nations like the United States,

Sweden, and Australia. Of course, in the last 18 years since the book was written, more people in many parts of the world have had access to the Internet. However, it can be said that there is no difference with the World Bank data that shows Internet access rates according to the population of the countries. According to the World Bank data, which is similar to Norris' data, Internet access is more common in rich and more democratic societies than in other countries (Norris, 2001).



Figure 2.2 Individuals using the Internet (% of population)

Source: International Telecommunication Union, World Telecommunication/ICT Development Report and database

In general terms, the economic conditions of countries has a critical point in how information society is shaped. Economic and technological developments, including social breaks, are the factors that have brought the network society discussions to this point.

Theorists who discuss the mass communication and the internet in terms of capitalist system and the hegemony must be mentioned in the thesis. According to critical approaches, the internet, which has become the most important element of the media, should not be discussed without considering its economic, political and cultural

dimensions. The inequality in the capitalist system is manifested and reproduced itself in this field too.

According to Schiller, one of the critical theorists, capitalism has found more space to expand itself through new media. Capitalism has been digitized and paved the way for its globalization. In particular, advertising and propaganda methods were spread through these tools. Hegemony relations have also become determinant. Critical theorists also state that there is no fundamental change in social relations. (Maxwell, 2003).

One of the most important of Fuchs' analysis of social media and the Internet from a critical perspective is his analysis of social media and society through power. Fuchs categorise different notions of power, introduces a dialectical notion of media power discusses the dialectics of social media power, and draws some conclusions about the need for a dialectical and critical theory of the media and society (Fuchs, 2011).

In addition, Geert Lovink made a different contribution to the critical analysis of the Internet and tried to draw attention to inequality with its aesthetic and art-based approach (Lovink, 2013).

2.3 Market, Hierarchy and Network

Beniger describes the innovations of the communication revolution as the bureaucratic organization that brings out the sharp division of tasks and hierarchies. Besides the revolution have emerged the new networks of transportation and communication for the goods and people. And it create the mass communication and the new consumer mass (Beniger, 2009). The innovations of the second communication revolution with the invention of the computer after the Second World War include flexible production and distribution methods. These methods increased network-type organization between markets and hierarchy, which more suitable for fragmented and personalized options with better communication capacity. Jan Van Dijk goes on to underline that network society creates a flow economy (Van Dijk, 2012).

Over the past 20 years, this method of flexible specialization mediated by information and communication networks has spread across the world and become the dominant mode of production. The next step was a transition to the world of distribution, circulation and consumption. The first thing required was a transformation of office work and the processing of information and knowledge. All developed countries now have a so-called service and knowledge economy. In this economy, information exchange and communication are predominant economic activities. Detailed and timely information has to be available for all operations at every level of economic activity. Increasingly, electronic networks are used to accomplish this. A particular kind of network specializes in the creation, distribution and exchange of a certain type of information: knowledge networks.

Dijk points out that Web 2.0 creates a new economic perspective with unique technologies and flexibility. The different organizational network administrations that Dijk put forward have undoubtedly influenced organizational structures like local governments.

One of Dijk's most important theories that feed the flow economy is Walter Powell's article in which he compares forms of organization. Powell makes a comparison of the market, hierarchies, and networks in this article (Powell, 2003). Powell argues that economic change should be evaluated within a specific social structural context. He emphasizes that certain forms of exchange are more social and based on relationships, mutual interests, and dignity. Stating that networks are less dominated by authority, he tries to identify factors that will enable people to understand the economy better. These factors can be used to generate arguments about the frequency, durability, and limitations of networks.

Table 2.1 Powell's stylized comparison of forms of economic organization (Powell, 2003)

	Forms		
Key features	Market	Hierarchy	Network
Normative basis	Contract - Property rights	Employment relationship	Complementary strengths
Means of communication	Prices	Routines	Relational
Methods of conflict resolution	Haggling - resort to courts for enforcement	Administrative fiat - supervision	Norm of reciprocity - reputational concerns
Degree of flexibility	High	Low	Medium
Amount of commitment among the parties	Low	Medium to high	Medium to high
Tone or climate	Precision and/or Suspicion	Formal, bureaucratic	Open-ended, mutual benefits
Actor preferences or choices	Independent	Dependent	Interdependent
Mixing of forms	Repeat transactions (Geertz, 1978) Contracts as hierarchical documents (Stinchcombe, 1985) (Eccles, 1985)	Informal organization (Dalton, 1957) Market-like features: Multiple partners profit centers, transfer pricing	Status hierarchies Formal rules

The value of goods to be exchanged in the markets is much more important than the relationship itself. Relationships are often described as commodities where they are important. In hierarchies, communication takes place through employment contracts. In the hierarchy, authority and command are the main elements of providing control. In relationships, previous interactions shape existing ones, but the intra-organizational exchange is most strongly shaped by the position of authority within the formal hierarchical structure. Networks can be complex: they neither include the exact criteria of the market nor the familiar paternalism of the hierarchy. The parties of a network agree to give up the right to pursue their interests at the expense of others. In other words, it can be said that there is a trust relationship based on network relations. In both networks, where both horizontal and vertical control is provided, technical controls are also introduced. Dijk states that the coordination of networks is possible with communication and information networks (Van Dijk, 2012). Besides, in terms of problem-solving, networks solve their own problems because of the common standards set rules that have emerged with the trust.

The structure of this economic framework that Powell put forward as a model of organization, in fact, reveals a schema that determines all relations on the whole. When looking at these organizational structures that have many political, social, moral, and communicative effects, it is necessary to keep in mind the trust-based structure of networks. What is essential for this thesis is that companies such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter are part of the network economy. As mentioned in the Introduction section, these companies are among the companies with the largest economies. Profits in the capitalist economy have been feeding the network economy to which these companies are part. These platforms have had a say in the economy with content development and advertising revenues. Technology companies and social media platforms also have sat at the center of democratic debates that could even influence elections. During the presidential election in 2016, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg appeared before the US Senate on accusations that his company sold users' data to third parties and manipulated voters based on false information (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). Google was another company facing the court (Jones, 2018). These companies, who stated that they care about getting information and took steps in this direction,

have always emphasized that it has opened up an area in the sense of freedom of expression to many people whose voices are not heard in the world.

New communication technologies and social media contribute to the enrichment of companies and their global hegemony instead of helping cultural development of societies. These technologies, which integrate with the capitalist industrial structure, encourage more consumption, create new channels for global companies, and transmit information which affects the masses (Yaylagül, 2013). And its algorithms help this.

In Powell's model, trust is at the critical point of networks' problem-solving, and the relational form of networks. However, the nature of the platforms, where the community has managed to balance within the relational dynamics between itself based on the market relations (Powell, 2003). The market knows that when it contacts governments, it will face certain sanctions. The most concrete example for market-government cooperation is the Twitter case in Turkey whereby the social media platform provided users' details to government numerous times upon the request (Milliyet, 2017). Such a relationship does not correspond to the characteristics of the networks. In a non-democratic society, the community cannot express itself freely within the networks it considers to be the public sphere, and there is no guarantee. Likewise, trust in the relationship with the market in these networks can be damaged because people do not know how their data can be protected. It is possible to talk about a more engaged and participatory society thanks to the cooperation, mutual gain, and reputation of the networks. In order to establish trust, it is necessary to see how the existing social networks are used for communication and to take a closer look at the "trust" relationship.

Hierarchy and market are not the only possible organizational forms; the community is a third form, which relies on trust as its central coordination mechanism (Powell, 2003).

2.3.1 Trust Model of Community and Relation with Local Governments

Adler defines the sources, mechanisms, and objects of trust to explain the power of the community. Although he examines trust and community through companies, he touches on remarkable features to understand the structure of trust. Sources of trust are familiarity through repeated interaction, interests, norms that create predictability and trustworthiness. Direct interpersonal contact, reputation, and institutional context are the mechanisms of trust, and finally, objects of trust include individuals, systems, and collectives. According to Adler, all these sources and mechanisms build on each other.

Putnam argues that social capital promotes trust in government by engaging in their communities and trusting each other. His findings from his work, which he carried out in Italy, revealed that in certain parts of the country there is a rich network of community associations. Citizens are engaged in public issues and take an active role in politics confidently and obey the law. “*Social and political networks are organized horizontally, not hierarchically,*” says Putnam, emphasizing the success of democracy in civic communities and the failure of uncivic region where social structure is hierarchical. To change this Putnam suggests revitalizing the social capital in the society to build trust (Putnam, 1993).

According to Zmerli and Newton, trust sustains a cooperative social climate, facilitates collective behavior and encourages regard for the public interest. Participation in community and the civic affair could be comfortable when citizens trust each other (Zmerli & Newton, 2008). Stating that this is the way to establish a strong civil society founded on a peaceful, stable, and efficient democracy, they examined the associations between generalized social trust, confidence in political institutions, and satisfaction with democracy in 24 countries. According to the results of their work, there are significant associations at the individual level between social trust, political confidence, and satisfaction with democracy.

Ensuring democracy and building relationships in a secure way typically increases engagement. Likewise, as civic engagement increases, people continue to develop

democracy. Local governments are more advantageous in terms of building trust more healthily. Studies show that people trust local governments more than national governments. The basis of demands, such as transparency and openness, is directly related to the desire to build mutual trust. People rely more on local governments and trust relationships within the network community to use local governments more effectively than general and national politics.

In western Europe, more people trust local governments than national governments. On average, across all countries, only 35% say that they tend to trust the national government. As for the amount of trust in national government, the lowest levels are in Italy, France, and Germany and the highest levels are in Finland. Other studies also show that in the US, Japan, Norway, and the UK people have a higher confidence in local governments than in national governments (Fitzgerald & Wolak, 2016).

As trust increases, the community's engagement and participation increases as well, so it is important to consider that local governments are more reliable in the eyes of the community and also to take into account the potential role of social media may have in this regard.

The relationship between people and other institutions is as meaningful as trust in the relationships established by public officials. Because a society that feels insecure loses its trust in all institutions over time, and this damages all social relations. The majority of the current society in Turkey do not trust the media, and social media platforms cannot be considered as sufficient alternatives to build that trust. Individuals felt free to attack someone as an anonymous user every day on these platforms which open to everyone. People, who wanted to escape the pressure from both the government and other users who did not have the same point of view, resorted to closed platforms. The fundamental reason for the high rates of usage of closed groups such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger in Turkey is the fear of government pressure. Users do not want to encounter annoying news, want to talk to people they see closer to themselves. The algorithms of the platforms fed these echo-chambers which the users voluntarily were part of. The reason behind all these developments is that people do not feel safe.

Citizens are silent on online platforms and do not express their ideas for they fear that something will happen to them. Particularly, it is challenging to expect individuals who refrain from talking about politics to participate in democratic decision-making processes online.

There is a need to consider a new model that can help the community to build trust in itself. The users who does not trust Twitter (market) against government (hierarchy) pressure, also thinks that they cannot be part of the decision-making process and their demands cannot be met. In the research part of the thesis, forms of communication are examined in more detail. It is necessary to consider a new model in which individuals can express their ideas more easily, are better informed, and have more transparent process.

The trust relationship seen in the community cannot be established in the relationship between the individual and the local government because the local government itself is based on a hierarchical relationship. Likewise, it is not possible for individuals to fully trust social media platforms such as Twitter because ultimately, these spaces are determined by market relations. Within online spaces, the community can change and transform all these balances on its behalf. Nevertheless, it is not so easy to escape the existing forms of relationship.

Encouraging citizens to participate in decision-making processes will help public policies become more efficient in the long run. The administration will be able to understand what the public says and be responsive. It is also emphasized that this communication is vital for more innovative results. However, the communication established here in the form of citizen and public administration limits this relationship as a bilateral relationship, not a social one. Although there seems to be a relationship between society and the institution, it can be stated that there is a problem in the spreading of information flow, communication, and the collectivization of information. Such efforts, where citizens' demands and requests, as well as the ability of local government to be checked and monitored, can both increase civic engagement and ensure that those who experience similar problems are aware of each other. The

relationship between citizens and public administration is still a bilateral relation, not a societal one. Although there seems to be a relationship between society and the institution, it can be stated that there is a problem in the dissemination of information and communication and there are obstacles to collectivization of information.

Non-societal relations between public administration and citizens can be explained with George Simmel's dyadic (two-party) and triadic (three-party) relationships. According to Simmel, a group of three elements is the basic and minimum unit of the social relationship. When a dyad becomes a triad, it brings along a significant qualitative change. A triad group is the simplest structure in which the group as a whole can exert pressure on its complementary members; it provides a social framework for restricting individual participants for common purposes. The two-party groups are based on close reciprocity, but the three-party groups impose their will on one member through the formation of a coalition between the other two. The third participant brings a new dimension to the relationship between the two, and there are three leading possible roles of the third party. Kostrova defines Simmel's triad roles (Kostrova, 2018).

So, Simmel has introduced the distinction between the dyad and the triad and defined it as the borderline between the social and the non-social. The addition of the third element disconnects the intimacy of the two making it public whereas in the dyad nothing transcends the unique characteristics of the participants. Triadic structures, first of all, are much more stable and, what is probably more important for Simmel as a sociologist, they generate a formally neutral relation that can be studied and described. The elements are considered equal, independent, and interchangeable which makes them easy to manipulate. In light of his sociology, the unique singularity of elusive reciprocity could be, perhaps, a subject of psychology, but not sociology. It is also noteworthy that the transition from a dyad to a triad is carried out, so to speak, by simple summation: the third element is added, introduced from the outside. The dyad and the triad remain separate and do not depend on each other.

The definition of the triad can be used for communication between local governments and citizens. This dyad does not create a society or societal communication. To transform the dyad to the triad, we should add the third actor to the dual relation. In

this thesis the author claims that at the local level online actors and structures can serve as an “ombudsman” to transform the relationship between public administration and citizens to a societal communication and triad. Such efforts, in which the local government can also monitor citizens' demands and transfers, can both increase civic engagements and ensure that those who have similar problems are aware of each other.

Balancing the relationship between the public and the administration with a tripartite structure will not only improve communication but will also benefit from community trust with the help of networks. This relationship structure, which may go beyond the hierarchical relationship, can be formed around more trust over time. Even if public speeches are made on social media, this form of communication is still taking place between administration and individual. Communication and problem-solving capacity must be removed from the individual level.

According to Öberg and Uba, “citizens deliver more reason-based input to democratic decision making” when they prepare and apply their interests and efforts in groups (collective level) than when they participate as individuals (individual level) (Olimid, 2014). From time to time, social media can be moved to the collective level, but in everyday processes that do not turn into campaigns, communication still has its limits.

In order to understand the circumstances, examples from Turkey and from around the world, which are based on trust, strong communication and participation, will be examined. Then, we will look closely at the practices of local governments, which can be said to use social media relatively well.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE AND DIFFERENT METHODS FOR ONLINE PARTICIPATION

It is essential to see if local governments implement activities that can increase trust and adapt to the dynamics of the network society. In order to increase participation, which is the main discussion of the thesis, and to build trust between the community and local governments, it is necessary to look at how local governments communicate in social media. To this end, the thesis studies the social media usage of municipalities in Turkey with a special focus on the social media accounts of Kadıköy and Üsküdar municipalities. Internet and these new social media platforms give citizens a chance to demand more transparent and accountable local administrations. Citizens can use these communication tools for participation and to be heard by local administrators.

3.1 Researches on Local Governments and Social Media

As far as Turkish municipalities and the Internet are concerned, the main setting for participation is e-municipality. The relationship between individuals and the municipality has been evaluated through e-municipality applications of municipalities. On the other hand, a group of researches was conducted by survey on how to achieve participation, based on interviews with municipalities. One of the most comprehensive of these studies is the Social Media in Municipalities and the book investigating the relationship between municipalities and social media. The survey is based on data obtained from 93 municipalities that are members of the Union of Marmara Municipalities.

The research, which studied the social media instruments used by municipalities in Turkey and analyzed the purpose for which these instruments are used, revealed that municipalities believe that social media will provide a potential benefit to their

institutions, but that they do not have a holistic view of using social media and focus on a limited number of social media tools.

According to the results of the research, the main purposes of using social media are as follows: informing the public about the services of the municipality (95.8%), contacting citizens (75.8%), implementing an open and transparent understanding of the municipality (62.9%), promoting the municipality (37.2%), ensuring citizen participation in decision-making processes (18.5%), improving cooperation with the municipality's environment (18.5%) and improving internal management processes (6%). Municipalities stated that they use social media as part of their information, communication, and openness policies. One of the highlights of this research is that social media is not preferred much as a means of participation in municipal decisions and developing cooperation with the municipality's environment (Sobacı, Köseoğlu, & Karkın, 2015).

Another study conducted in 2012 analyzed official Twitter accounts of nine metropolitan municipalities in Turkey on their tweets. The research found that the messages sent from the official Twitter accounts of metropolitan municipalities were mostly related to municipalities activities, infrastructure works, and social and cultural activities. The results also showed that the nine metropolitan municipalities, which were included in the study, used their official Twitter accounts to inform the people and promote their activities and services (Tarhan, 2012).

In another research the official Twitter accounts of 22 municipalities were analyzed using the content analysis method. The results revealed that the interaction on these Twitter accounts mostly included communicating problems and requesting information. Besides, when the number of followers of Twitter accounts is taken into consideration, it has been found that the engagement level is limited, and Twitter accounts are mostly used to transfer information (Memiş, 2015).

A 2018 study analyzed 289 tweets shared by Küçükçekmece, Esenyurt, and Bağcılar municipalities in a month. The results indicated that despite the Küçükçekmece

Municipality shared the highest number of tweets, it had the least number of followers (Sayılanoğlu, 2018).

Another research examining the use of social media by metropolitan mayors found that they used Twitter more effectively and more frequently than other social media platforms. The study showed that while a mayor shared 80-90 tweets in a month on average on Twitter, Facebook posts have been found to reach this figure in three months. Another important finding was that the use of social media by metropolitan mayors had a more one-way communicative dimension. In other words, most of the mayors said that municipalities act social media like a traditional media tool (Arslan, 2016).

According to Haro-De-Rosario et al, Facebook and Twitter may become the new channels for local governments to exchange information and respond to citizens and also to make requests (Haro-de-Rosario, Sáez-Martín, & del Carmen Caba-Pérez, 2018).

In a more extensive study that included major municipalities in 15 Western European countries, Bonso'n et al. examined the main themes that appeared on their Facebook pages based on a 16-category typology (Bonsón, Royo, & Ratkai, 2015). The typology was used to analyze the type of information provided on the Facebook posts of municipalities. Findings indicate that European local governments tend to post about cultural and sports events in their cities (Lappas, Triantafillidou, Deligiaouri, & Kleftodimos, 2018).

Another research worked on the communication strategies used by local Greek governments through Facebook and tried to understand the effects on citizens' online engagement. In the research, which analyzed the content of the municipalities' Facebook posts, Lappas concluded that Greek municipalities use Facebook as a traditional one-way channel of communication for promoting events organized by the municipality and informing citizens about services, programs, and activities. Another remarkable finding of this research was that marketing of the municipality, provision

of information, transparency, dialogue, and impression management had a positive impact on user engagement whereas promoting the mayor and marketing of events had a negative impact on the number of comments (Lappas et al., 2018). This thesis also compares the results of engagement according to categories.

Guillamón et al. tried to focus on the usage of social media tools by local governments for transparency purposes. Their findings show that the level of e-participation, population size, citizens' income level, and level of indebtedness affect Facebook use by Italian and Spanish local governments. Therefore, these factors influence the level of municipal transparency through social media (Guillamón, Ríos, Gesuele, & Metallo, 2016). In this research, they found essential relations between social media use and different factors. There is a positive relationship between population size, multiculturalism, Internet penetration, education level, financial autonomy (higher proper revenues), indebtedness, and social media use by local governments. There is a relationship between the gender of the mayor, political ideology, and social media use by local governments.

Through their work, Borge et al. examined their experience of participation in local government in Catalonia, both online and offline, and examined its socio-economic, technological, and political effects (Borge, Colombo, & Welp, 2009). In Catalonia there are numerous participatory initiatives both on- and offline but their expansion depends on population size because the political variables, the territorial situation, even the technological and socio-economic conditions are very linked to the population dimension. In that sense, the institutional impulse and support for participatory initiatives in the small municipalities and the provinces of Lleida, Girona, and Tarragona are very necessary. On the other hand, lately, the local and autonomic governmental support and regulations for participation on- and offline have become more planned and strategically integrated, but there is still fragmentation and a lack of coordination in many initiatives. Also, e-participation initiatives are not so widespread, and the most frequent web functionalities are mailboxes for complaints and the contact email, leaving behind more deliberative and participatory channels.

Municipalities also mentioned that the Internet is preferred because it is a cheap way to reach the public for a long time. This was done in academic studies, but in fact, the advertising strategies of social media do not bring an increase in the number of organic followers without advertising. In this respect, Twitter seems to offer more advantages than other platforms. However, in order to reach followers on other platforms, a budget is required at least for social media officials.

In Turkey, social media and a large part of the research on local governments accounted for research in the field of public relations. In the sense of public participation, these studies were not deemed necessary in the thesis. However, when the literature is examined, it is seen that social media should be examined more deeply within online participation channels. In the same way, there are certain deficiencies in studies in different countries (Sobaci & Karkin, 2013).

3.2 Different Methods for Online Participation

The use of the Internet for participation in local governments goes back to the beginning of the 1990s. According to the results of the research conducted by Charles Piller in the USA in 1994, there was a large number of people who wanted the Internet to be used for political purposes. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents wanted to attend municipal meetings online, 46 percent wanted to send messages to their representatives, and 50 percent said they would like the possibility of electronic voting (Castells, 1998). Indeed, the Amsterdam and Santa Monica examples mentioned in Castells' his book show how the Internet is used in a way that increases the engagement on the local government scale.

The Public Electronic Network (PEN) in Santa Monica, California is the first free, government-sponsored electronic network system in the United States. The system menu was made of five sections for Santa Monica residents to choose from: City Hall, Community Center, Mailroom, Conferences, Current events. Any resident, even a homeless person, could register in this system (McKeown, 1991).

The Public Electronic Network (PEN), a free computer-based messaging system available to Santa Monica, CA residents, allowed homeless and “homed” individuals to meet around the issue of homelessness. These meetings eventually led to collaborative political action to enable homeless individuals to more effectively seek employment. PEN also allowed female residents to engage in political discussion, and to form a female users' group to support female participation in the electronic networking system, and in the political community as a whole (Rogers, Collins-Jarvis, & Schmitz, 1994).

Online participation methods, which date back to the early 1990s, are mostly found in e-government applications and social media. Local governments are actively trying to use social media to achieve active citizen participation. Academic studies, in particular, focus on how municipalities use social media to increase civic engagement. When looking at social media studies in the world, it is possible to see that they still have limitations in terms of increasing participation and engagement. In addition, the research methods can be limited to the number of likes and shares of users. It can be said that these data alone cannot help to measure participation and impact. Therefore, it is necessary to examine different participation methods.

Many online platforms can increase civic engagement and give place to share the thoughts of citizens in a crowdsourced way. Most of these activities, which are carried out under the leadership of experts, give citizens the right to speak. We will try to explain some of the online methods that can contribute to governance and help citizens to become involved in decision-making in local governments through a trust-based relationship.

Together with the network society, the increase in the use of the Internet led to the search for participation in technology-based results. Among examples of citizen engagement and collaboration in different countries, there are platforms where everyone can participate, voice their demands, and vote for others' ideas to succeed. These platforms provide tools that allow people to see what is going on in their neighborhood on maps or how the city budget will be spent. The common characteristics of these tools given in the examples are being open to declare ideas, being in a forum where ideas can be discussed, voting on ideas, sharing the plans of

local administrations publicly and controlling the budget. The place which people can see and comment on complaints and request in one place increase the feeling of be taken seriously by local administrations.

Moreover, taking responsibility in a really short time also empowers citizens. The public's steps to become a community provide the opportunity to make a powerful voice together. There are many tools and platforms created by urban designing companies or urban planners. Although it is a point that citizens should observe in terms of the relationship with the market, it can be said that such systems have a chance to force local governments to be more transparent. The possibility of eliminating the hierarchical dialogue between the municipality and the user and establishing a collective dialogue can be considered positive.

Platforms such as Carticipe, Block by Block, Bang Table, Engagement HQ, CityPlanner, Commonplace, coUrbanize, Creative Citizens, Sticky World, Crowdgaug, CitizenLab are based on crowdsourcing, information sharing, improving decision-making and making citizens more engaged.

One of the most common and relatively successful methods of online participation with the technology being used to achieve greater access and responsiveness is the SeeClickFix.com platform. Public officials and neighbors have come together on SeeClickFix to resolve millions of issues. The system, which one can access both as an administrator and a citizen, allows the public administrator and citizens work together on problematic issues.

The SeeClickFix.com platform has been used by citizens in local communities employing the platform to report waste disposal issues, pest control problems, and government service delivery shortfalls. This platform, and others that are similar in design, frequently allow citizens to upload photos and tracking information so that local responders can locate and address problems quickly and the responding agencies can, in turn, provide immediate acknowledgment of complaints and keep citizens updated with progress reports (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016).

One of the pioneers of such applications is the UK-based FixMyStreet, a program for mapping and reporting street problems to the councils. With this program, 1,643,201 issues have been reported since 2007, and 678,161 of them have been marked as resolved.

Another method to use social media channels for information-gathering in addition to providing information is the use of 311 city services in the US by connecting with their Twitter account. 311 services are used by cities in the USA for non-emergency situations. Although there are options such as website and application, it is useful for some cities to accept requests from Twitter to see how new online methods are integrated. People can create new service requests; check the status of existing requests, snap a photo, and submit it with a comment and also pinpoint a location (Chicago, 2019).

One of the online methods to increase participation in different countries was online deliberative forums, which were tried especially in the USA and UK. Weblab.org has developed a successful ‘small group dialogue technique’ based on deliberative democratic principles (Dahlberg, 2001). Another example, HyperForum computer software allows many people to participate in an online deliberation of a complex policy problem.

Digital participatory platforms are explained by grouping different online platforms in the Digital Participatory Platforms for Co-production in Urban Development article. Summarizing the studies in the literature, Falco and Kleinhans defines three levels of interaction: information sharing, interaction, and civic engagement, involvement, collaboration. In information sharing, there are platforms like Open City Chicago, Open Tool Kits. The second sub-level, consulting is generally used for doing a survey and collecting data (Citizen Space, Cityzen, Local Data, etc.) (Falco & Kleinhans, 2018). The platforms included in the Interaction level are those where the problems can be shared, and local authorities can be contacted, such as Fixmystreet or SeeClickFix mentioned above. Sending requests, resolving community concerns and promoting dialogue are the most critical features of these platforms. (Civic Commons,

Irekia, mySociety, WhatDoTheyKnow, etc.) The last one, co-production is about interactive and co-productive platforms such as FragNebenan, Urban Interactive Studio, Carticipe, Creative Citizens Sticky World, Bang the Table, etc. that enable online and offline outcomes.

Neighborland uses a public engagement platform designed for government agencies, developers, and civic organizations (Neighborland, 2019). Their software is the only solution designed for planners to collaborate with their stakeholders in an accessible, participatory, and equitable way with over 3 million people. This platform also increases participation, allows citizens to have a say, and at the same time, allows the citizen to meet with different actors who transform the city. Live streaming is also significant to enable local governments to interact with citizens and to be part of the process in a transparent way. Among the social media platforms such as Periscope, which are suitable for live broadcasting, are widely used for this purpose. Broadcasting council meetings make more transparent local administrations possible. In her study, Mahajan-Cusack tried to compile the methods used by local governments for citizen engagement, and among them, the best examples are the broadcasting of council meetings on the local government website or other platforms.

Using the Internet or social media channels for informing citizens as a transparency method has come to the fore in 2019 after the local elections in Turkey as well. Ekrem İmamoğlu, the winner of the June 23 Local Elections, shared his council meetings via the Internet for everyone to watch after he had won the first elections on March 31. The number of people who followed these municipal council meetings, which could be attended by everyone, was quite low. However, reaching millions of people through the Internet is possible. It is essential to follow the decisions concerning the city, the votes of the parties, and the allegations of corruption. This has positive effects on civic engagement in terms of transparency and openness.

A similar practice was seen in Ankara Metropolitan Municipality meetings, and all of the meetings were shared with the public through social media platforms. At this point, it is also a matter of discussion what are the motives of citizens to be a part of meetings

and relations with participation. After the March 31 elections in 2019, Mansur Yavaş, who was elected as the Mayor of Ankara, published the municipal council meetings on the Internet and a municipal meeting had attracted a record number of audiences. What was remarkable was that this meeting about an “iron and steel tender.” (Cumhuriyet, 2019). The reason behind the public's huge interest in this issue may be having seen a transparent form of communication that it has never encountered before. However, the steps taken by the municipality do not cover the whole society at the same time. Therefore, it is not possible to say that the interest shown here increases participation. This step, which is invaluable with regard to civic engagement in terms of openness and transparency, may not affect citizens' participation and involvement in decision-making processes. It is also difficult to say that all of the Internet users, whom are met through this method, are people living in Ankara and benefiting from municipal services. However, it can be foreseen that these methods (i.e. broadcasting sessions live on the Internet in any condition and enabling citizens to follow the processes) will affect the Internet users in different ways.

When looking at different examples of online participation, it is seen that these platforms try to increase citizen participation through different websites and applications with independent organizations rather than just the administrative bodies. One of the notable points is that these applications and websites are heavily implemented in the US and Europe. These can influence the uneven development of network society, economic resources and scarcity of people's demands for democratic participation. As a result, although it is worth examining different examples of engaging citizens, it should be borne in mind that each country has its dynamics and that different appropriate methods must be found. For this reason, understanding how citizens use social media tools and looking at the drawbacks of local governments will help to create more effective democratic participation processes.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY: ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS BY USING TWITTER AND THE CHALLENGES: KADIKÖY AND ÜSKÜDAR MUNICIPALITIES

4.1 Introduction to Case Study

Studies conducted both in Turkey and different countries that analyzed participation of municipalities on social media emphasize the relation between different factors to understand the impact. Content analysis method is one of the ways to understand this in previous studies. In the case study section of this thesis, Twitter, which is thought to be the most open to interaction among social media platforms, is discussed and how two Istanbul district municipalities actively using the Twitter platform in the context of civic engagement.

Twitter is an American online microblogging and social networking service where users post and interact with messages known as "tweets". Tweets are restricted to 280 characters for all languages. People can follow Twitter users by searching a username, usually indicated by the '@' sign. Exchanges via the site are searchable using hashtags, denoted by the '#' sign. Registered users can post, like, and retweet tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Twitter was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams and launched in July of that year (Berger, 2018).

Twitter is one of the most widely used communication tools by local governments in Turkey. In this platform, where they can interact with users, they are able to inform the community about municipalities and get complaints and expectations of the public. Twitter is a place where municipalities need to develop strategies to connect with society in terms of participation.

Bruns and Moe's article about Twitter reveal the structural layers of communication used for various communication purposes. In the conceptual model, they propose three basic layers of communication: micro-level of interpersonal communication, meso-level of networks followed, and macro-level of hashtag-based correspondence. In the macro-level, adding a user's hashtag to a tweet has the potential to reach more than its own number of followers. Hashtags are often used to create sensitivity on a particular topic and allow users to see all tweets on the topic at the same time. Hashtags are also valuable in terms of participation because they are a way to have a collective attitude under a common title. Hashtags are one of the features that Twitter put forward in order to express democratic demands and to ensure democratic participation on a subject. Of course, the limited number of users from thousands of tweets with the same hashtag begs the question whether everyone can participate equally in this conversation. However, it does not prevent people from being a part of the tweets in the hashtag. Meso-level indicates the level of communication between the follower and the followed. Following does not have to be mutual. Tweets are public if the account is not closed and open to everyone. The filter bubbles created by Twitter will be discussed in the next chapter, but this is just the level in which people communicate with the like-minded. Thanks to the timeline, people follows what one wants to listen and stays out of thoughts does not want to see. Thus, meso-level is the most suitable level to create our own echo chambers. The micro-level is a form of communication that allows users to call @reply to talk to each other. When a @mention is sent, that is the @ sign is placed in front of the user name of the person to be addressed, the users declare that they want to be in contact with a person. This one-to-one communication level, which does not always have to be mutual, changes to @ reply as soon as the mentioned party responds and then communication starts (Bruns & Highfield, 2013).

All these different layers of communication make Twitter an appropriate platform for examining communication and participation. Through this chapter, Twitter platform will be examined to address the successes and failures of local governments in terms of participation. At the same time, it is also possible to determine whether different online participation methods are needed in Chapter 3.

The Introduction section tried to be briefly explained why Istanbul municipalities were selected. Istanbul is a city big enough to represent Turkey's economical, sociological, political and all other aspects. In addition, it can be assumed that municipalities and services are more important for the citizens in this city where the population increases rapidly. For the purposes of this study, the metropolitan municipality was excluded and district municipality accounts with the highest number of followers and the highest level of engagement were examined. Besides, people living in big cities use the Internet and social media more than those in rural areas.

Municipalities in Istanbul were ranked based on the number of followers and tweets to determine which ones may be worth examining.

Table 4.1 İstanbul district municipalities' Twitter information

Municipality	Number of Followers	Number of tweets	DM	Blue tick
Kadıköy Municipality	2013000	55100	Closed	Yes
Beşiktaş Municipality	152000	20200	Open	Yes
Pendik Municipality	93900	41700	Open	Yes
Maltepe Municipality	66500	30700	Open	Yes
Üsküdar Municipality	56500	36300	Open	Yes
Beyoğlu Municipality	53900	13600	Closed	Yes
Kartal Municipality	52300	31500	Open	Yes
Beylikdüzü Municipality	49000	31400	Closed	Yes
Ataşehir Municipality	47200	73200	Open	Yes
Ümraniye Municipality	45200	33900	Closed	Yes
Sancaktepe Municipality	37800	14900	Open	Yes
Şişli Municipality	33900	28100	Open	Yes
Tuzla Municipality	29200	26300	Open	Yes

Table 4.1 (continued) İstanbul district municipalities' Twitter information

Esenyurt Municipality	28700	2364	Open	Yes
Bağcılar Municipality	28100	14300	Open	Yes
Başakşehir Municipality	27700	15400	Open	Yok
Çekmeköy Municipality	27500	24400	Open	Yes
Esenler Municipality	25800	39600	Open	Yes
Fatih Municipality	23600	32100	Open	Yes
Beykoz Municipality	22400	25200	Open	Yes
Sarıyer Municipality	21600	18500	Open	Yes
Küçükçekmece Municipality	20300	22200	Open	Yes
Büyükçekmece Municipality	19000	23200	Open	Yes
Eyüpsultan Municipality	18200	21300	Open	Yes
Bakırköy Municipality	17200	10200	Closed	No
Kağıthane Municipality	16700	9463	Open	Yes
Zeytinburnu Municipality	16100	14500	Open	Yes
Sultanbeyli Municipality	15500	16000	Open	Yes
Silivri Municipality	15000	6241	Open	Yok
Sultangazi Municipality	14400	12400	Open	Yes
Güngören Municipality	12100	13400	Open	Yes
Arnavutköy Municipality	11800	12800	Open	Yes
Gaziosmanpaşa Municipality	11700	10400	Open	Yes
Bayrampaşa Municipality	10900	15800	Open	Yes
Şile Municipality	10200	7035	Open	Yes
Çatalca Municipality	9916	3396	Closed	No
Avcılar Municipality	9687	7787	Open	Yes

I also checked whether the direct message (DM) systems of the municipalities' Twitter accounts are open and whether they have the blue tick (verification) given to users by Twitter. Among the 37 municipality accounts, the direct message feature was turned off in 6 of them. One of these municipalities is Kadıköy. Although it has the highest number of followers, one of the ways that users can interact with the municipality is closed. In addition to the features of social media that seem to be open to interaction and at least two-way communication, the municipality also has control over how communication can be achieved.

Kadikoy Municipality's social media employees attributed the disabling of direct messaging on Twitter to workload and business:

DM is never enabled. It's not about transparency, we just do not want to open a new field. It's about density. If we open it, the workload will be doubled. (K1)

Let me try to sum it up with an example. Twitter accidentally opened our DM one day. It took three days. Tens of messages. 2 million people follow us and people write to us, submit their complaints, get the answer and delete the tweet. They don't want it to appear on their home page because they don't want to look like a complaining person. So they wipe their own tweet. Naturally, someone, who doesn't want to look like this, will send a message using DM. I think it's up to me to cover transparency with DM. If it is something that we can produce and answer, it makes more sense to write openly. It's a bit more public. (K2)

When the tweets collected from the accounts of the municipalities in Istanbul are examined for engagement (i.e. the total number of likes and retweets received by a post), we see that the Kadıköy Municipality has the highest number of followers, but it's in the fourth place in terms of engagement. The Üsküdar Municipality, on the other hand, which ranks fifth according to the number of followers, has the highest level of engagement.

With 2 million followers, the Twitter engagement of the Kadıköy Municipality, which has the chance to reach a very large audience, is quite low compared to Üsküdar. Therefore, comparing the Kadıköy Municipality with the Üsküdar Municipality, which

has a high level of engagement, can help us to show the dynamics of social media and how social media affects civic engagement.

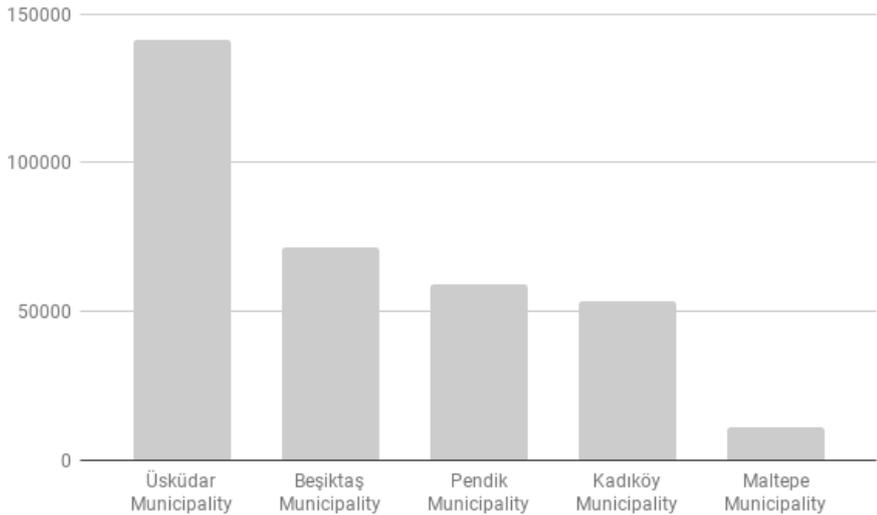


Figure 4.1 Engagement of Municipalities Tweets

Comparing the 6-month engagement numbers, we can see that the Üsküdar Municipality has received much more interaction from the Kadıköy Municipality.

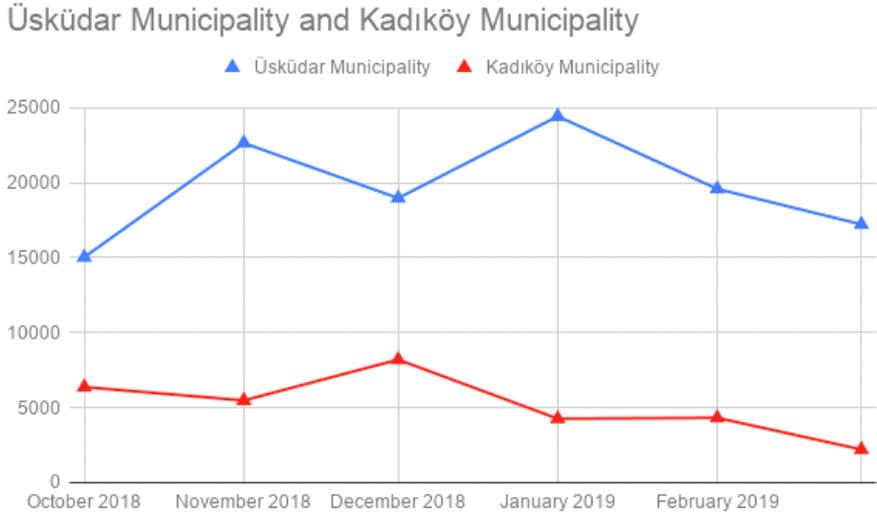


Figure 4.2 Engagements of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipality in 6 months

When looking at the 6-month engagement, it is also necessary to determine which media type the two municipalities use while sharing tweets. In the current literature, it is mentioned that media types can also change the engagement in different ways. Although increasing engagement does not mean increased participation, it is useful to examine how municipalities use different media types.

SPSS Statistics (IBM, USA) Version 20 was used for statistical analysis of the obtained data. The frequency of media types (Text, Photo, Video, GIF) shared by Kadıköy and Üsküdar municipalities were evaluated on a monthly basis for 6 months using cross tables. The difference between the groups in terms of these frequencies was evaluated by Chi-square test because all the groups met the assumptions of the test. Accordingly, a difference was found for the type of media shared by Kadıköy and Üsküdar municipalities in each month ($p < 0.001$).

Table 4.2 Type of Media Shared by Municipalities by Months. NoT: Number of tweets.

Municipality	Month	Media Type								Total	
		Text		Photo		Video		GIF			
		NoT	%	NoT	%	NoT	%	NoT	%	NoT	%
Kadıköy Municipality	Oct	251	68,96	93	25,55	20	5,49	0	0	364	100
	Nov	268	68,36	113	28,83	11	2,81	0	0	392	100
	Dec	238	65,93	108	29,92	15	4,15	0	0	361	100
	Jan	223	67,37	95	28,70	12	3,63	1	0,30	331	100
	Feb	174	69,05	73	28,97	5	1,98	0	0	252	100
	Mar	369	82,18	73	16,26	7	1,56	0	0	449	100
Üsküdar Municipality	Oct	216	48,11	166	36,97	67	14,92	0	0	449	100
	Nov	184	42,40	165	38,01	85	19,59	0	0	434	100
	Dec	153	38,73	142	35,95	100	25,32	0	0	395	100
	Jan	149	35,73	172	41,25	96	23,02	0	0	417	100
	Feb	142	32,87	203	46,99	87	20,14	0	0	432	100
	March	194	43,02	169	37,47	88	19,51	0	0	451	100

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Districts

The Kadıköy Municipality, which has the highest number of followers, and the Üsküdar Municipality, which has the highest level of engagement, are also worth comparing when considering the municipalities in Istanbul. The two municipalities are neighboring municipalities, but the Kadıköy Municipality has been governed by the Republican People's Party for years while Üsküdar has long been a Justice and Development Party municipality. Among these neighbor districts, Kadıköy displays a more secular and pluralistic profile whereas Üsküdar appears to be a more closed in which more conservative people live. Finding clues about these differences or similarities between two districts while using social media can also be guiding in terms of increasing engagement.

The demographic, political, and geographical characteristics of these two municipalities are important components which will make this thesis meaningful before going into the details of the Tweet analyses. These two municipalities are located on the Anatolian side of İstanbul and are also neighboring districts.



Figure 4.3 Geographical location of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipality

When we look at some of the demographic characteristics of the two districts, we see that there are not many differences between them. Therefore, it does not seem possible to think that there may be a difference between the communication established by the municipalities due to these features. There are also studies in the literature claiming that these features have an impact on online participation. However, the different characteristics of the municipalities should still be investigated in terms of participation.

Üsküdar is a 36-square kilometer wide district with a population of 582,666. According to 201 educational statistics in Üsküdar, the number of illiterate people living in the district is 9,502 while the number of people, who know how to read and write although they have never been schooled, is 66,580. The data further shows that there are 80,589 primary school graduates, 68,261 elementary education graduates, 24,801 graduates of secondary school or equivalent, 116,395 graduates of high school or equivalent, 90,670 college or faculty graduates, 12,183 graduate school graduates, 3,253 doctorate degree graduates. The education level of 18.175 people is not known (ÜsküdarBelediyesi, 2014).

When we look at the status of the inhabitants of Üsküdar in terms of their registered provinces, Istanbulites come first with 104,493 people. Rize comes second with a population of 30,000 people, followed by Sivas with 28,377 people, Giresun with 27,876 people and Kastamonu with 26,252 people. The list continues with Trabzon, Ordu and Erzincan.

The surface area of Kadıköy is 25.20 km square and its population is 451.453. The district's demographic data shows that Kadıköy has a higher number of residents aged 65+ compared to other municipalities in Istanbul. According to Turkstat's 2015 data on educational levels of the district's residents , the rate of those who have master's and doctorate degrees is 7.58%, the rate of graduate and high school graduates is 28.73%, the rate of secondary and high school graduates is 31.18%, the rate of primary school graduates is 16.19%, the literacy rate is 0.98%. The rate of those who can read and write but did not finish a school is 4.68% (KadıköyBelediyesi, 2018).

In terms of the registered provinces of the people living in Kadıköy, Istanbul residents come first with 100,000 people. Then comes Rize with 14,673 people, followed by Sivas with 13,536 people, Trabzon with 12,230 people and Kastamonu with 9,906 people.

Factors such as education, people living in different cultures together, population density and income status need to be considered in particular. Therefore, it is possible to say that there is no significant difference between the two municipalities. The number of people, who came from different cities to live in Istanbul, is also important in terms of their feeling of belonging to that city. It is common for countrymen, who come to a city like Istanbul, to look after each other and have similar ideological, political and religious beliefs. This is the reason why we looked at these data.

4.2.1 Political Background of Districts

Since the local elections in 1989, Kadıköy Municipality has chosen the RPP candidate for mayor during the remaining five election periods, including the Social Democratic People's Party, SHP (1989-1994). Between 1994 and 2014, Selami Öztürk served as the Mayor of Kadıköy for 20 years, to be succeeded by Aykurt Nuhoğlu, who won the 2014 elections by getting more than 72 percent of the votes. In March 2019 election Şerdil Dara Odabaşı won the mayoral seat with more than 65 percent of the votes.

Among people, who have been living in Kadıköy, since 2004, over 50 percent voted for the RPP, and over the years this percentage went up as high as 72 percent. When we look at the election results, it is possible to say that people living in Kadıköy support a party more homogeneously. Especially after the Justice and Development Party came to power, the RPP votes increased in this region while the JDP deepening its power, RPP voters consolidated around the party more. The JDP candidate, who came after the RPP candidate in the elections in 2019, won nearly 20 percent of the vote.

Table 4.3 Mayors of Kadıköy Municipality

Mayors of Kadıköy Municipality			
Year	Mayor	Party	Percentage of votes
1984	Osman Hızlan	ANAP	%57,42
1989	Cengiz Özyalçın	SHP	%45,00
1994	Selami Öztürk	SHP	%27,14
1999	Selami Öztürk	RPP	%26,16
2004	Selami Öztürk	RPP	%51,27
2009	Selami Öztürk	RPP	%68,20
2014	Aykurt Nuhuğlu	RPP	%72,40
2019	Şerdil Dara Odabaşı	RPP	%65,99

Local election results in Üsküdar show that right-wing parties have been in power in the district since 1994. Winning successive votes as the Welfare Party and the Felicity Party candidate between 1994 and 2004, Yılmaz Bayat served as district's mayor for 10 years. Between 2004 and 2019 voters in Üsküdar supported the JDP. Hilmi Türkmen, who won over 45 percent of the votes and became mayor in 2014, was re-elected in the 2019 elections. Right-wing parties have increased their votes since 1994 with the highest ratio achieved in the March 2019 local elections by Hilmi Türkmen with over 48 percent.

Table 4.4 Mayors of Üsküdar Municipality

Mayors of Üsküdar Municipality			
Year	Mayor	Party	Percentage of votes
1984	Necmettin Öztürk	ANAP	%49,09
1989	Niyazi Yurtseven	SHP	%39,22
1994	Yılmaz Bayat	RP	%28,15
1999	Yılmaz Bayat	FP	%28,72
2004	Mehmet Çakır	JDP	%43,83
2009	Mustafa Kara	JDP	%38,87
2014	Hilmi Türkmen	JDP	%45,74
2019	Hilmi Türkmen	JDP	%48,25

One of the things that needs attention is the fact that 50 percent of people living in Üsküdar still support other parties and the district has a much more heterogeneous voter population than Kadıköy.

Second candidate after JDP's Hilmi Türkmen in the March 2019 elections was the RPP candidate Ahmet Kılıç, who won 45 percent of the votes. In other words, when we compare the election results and the voter profile with Kadıköy, we can say that voter behavior points to a more homogenous structure in Kadıköy and in Üsküdar there is a balance between the opposition and the ruling party.

These two districts, which draw very different political profiles, should also take into account to understand in the social media strategies followed by the municipalities run by different parties.

The political group governing a municipality is also important for civic engagement because there are many studies in the literature taking into account political ownership.

However, when looking at the overall studies, it can be said that there is no significant difference between right and left administrations. Guillamón et al draws attention to this factor in their study on Spain and Italy and explains as follows:

Halvorsen (2003); Welch et al. (2005); Tolbert and Mossberger (2006); Kim (2007) and Halavais's (2009) arguments, Tolbert et al. (2008) argue that right-wing governments, which are inclined to lower public spending, are more likely to adopt e-government initiatives and, therefore, disclose more online information, since this implies increased efficiency and cost reduction. In contrast, other studies find that left-wing governments are more transparent than right-wing ones (Ferejohn, 1999; Cárcaba & García-García, 2010; Guillamón et al., 2011; García-Sánchez et al., 2013). It is commonly assumed that left-wing parties favour public spending increases while right-wing parties aim at budget reductions (Tellier, 2006). In this regard, Ferejohn (1999) argues that politicians in favour of a larger public sector should increase transparency to prompt voters to pay higher taxes.”(Guillamón et al., 2016)

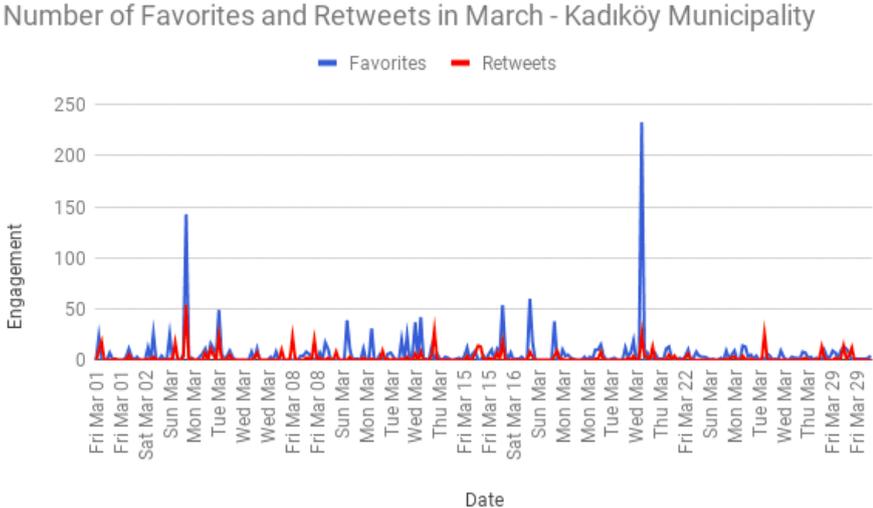
From these studies, it does not seem possible to state that the political stance of municipalities has an impact on civic engagement. In addition, Kadiköy, which has a more homogeneous voter population, could have been expected to have a more engaged audience. Üsküdar Municipality's Twitter structure relies a little more on using the features of the political position, which we will look at in further detail later.

In the following sections, I will try to address how a communication type that does not take into consideration may cause problems on platforms such as Twitter. Encoding and categorizing the tweets of municipalities based on content analysis to understand how they communicate is an important part of the research of the thesis. It's important to see what users are more interested in and interact with. It is also necessary to assess the characteristics of municipalities that may be important for civic engagement.

A limitation was required to make the research more in-depth and to categorize tweets. For this reason, municipalities potentially increase the number of their tweets

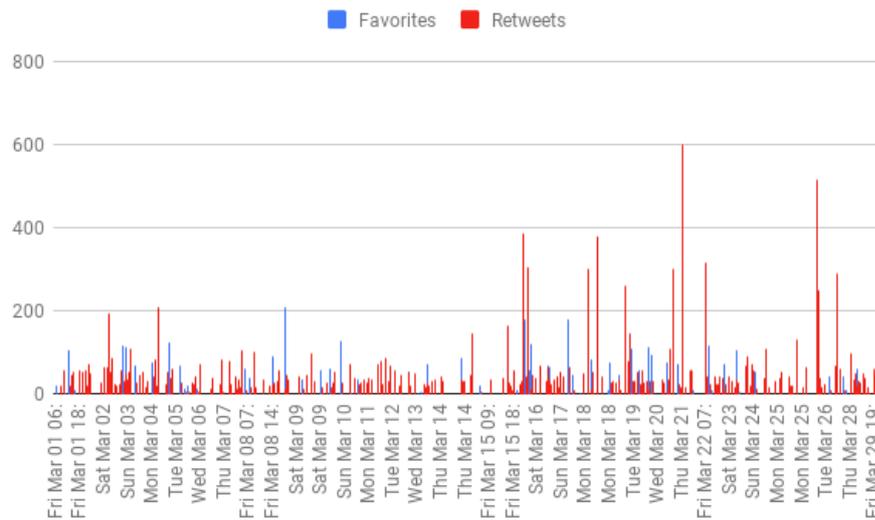
promoting their works and services during the one-month period before the election, Before the election Turkish society become more politicized and polarized. All tweets by Üsküdar and Kadıköy municipalities posted between March 1-30, 2019 were reviewed.

The Kadıköy Municipality’s account shared 285 tweets in March. These tweets received a total of 1,649 likes and 583 retweets. Only 19 of the shared tweets were retweets of the Kadıköy Municipality account.



Figures 4.4 Number of favorites and retweets in March for Kadıköy Municipality

Üsküdar Municipality shared 448 tweets in March. These tweets received 4,143 likes and 13,595 retweets in total. The municipality had 187 retweets. It can be said that the Üsküdar Municipality shares tweets of other people and influencers on Twitter and this is a feature that increases the engagement.



Figures 4.5 Number of Favorites and Retweets in March for Üsküdar Municipality

4.3 Categories of Shared Tweets

The “dialogue” category consists of tweets containing the municipality’s answers to complaints and requests from users. In the “events” category, there are tweets about the various events that the Municipality plans to organize. The “important days” category includes tweets from the Municipality’s Twitter account celebrating special days like the International Women’s Day and the Victory of the Dardanelles. The “promoting” category consists of tweets that describe the works and services of the Municipality and they share these to promote the Municipality and the Mayor.

Table 4.5 Categories of tweets

Categories	Content of posts
Dialogue	Answers (replies) to social media users about their demand, request, post.
Events	Information about events organized by the municipality (concerts, conferences etc.)
Promoting municipality and mayor	The works and services of the Municipality, press announcements, promoting mayor.
Important dates	International Women’s Day, The Victory of Dardanelles
Informative	Information about the pharmacy, election rules etc

4.3.1 Tweet Categories of Kadıköy Municipality

Tweets that the Kadikoy Municipality shared during the month of March mainly included the answers given to followers. The remaining tweets were mostly announcing the municipal events and projects. Of the 285 tweets, 207 were responses to tweets which mentions the Kadıköy Municipality.

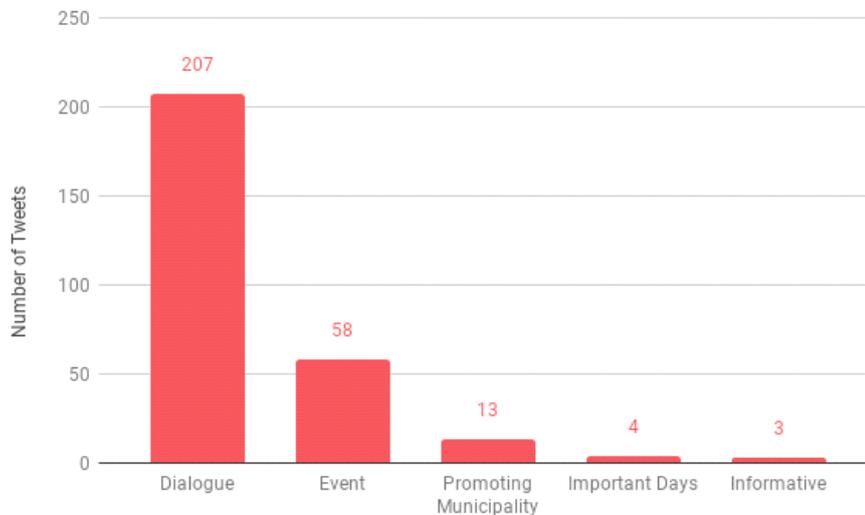


Figure 4.6 Categories of tweets/retweets of Kadıköy Municipality

An analysis of the tweet sub-categories reveals that the municipality's tweets in the events category are mostly related to art and cultural activities.

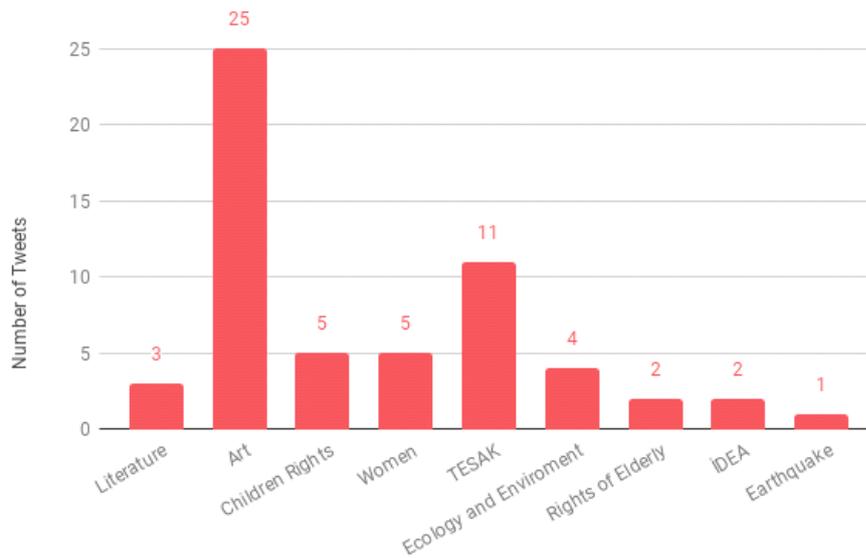


Figure 4.7 Sub-categories of Event Category - Kadıköy Municipality

The second most shared event category was about the Kadıköy History, Literature and Art Library (TESAK), a library and cultural center in the district organizing regular events in literature, politics, history and philosophy.

It was seen that the Kadıköy Municipality did not tweet on a specific subject except for the categories of events and dialogue. Although there were a few tweets in the promoting category, the Municipality had tweets in terms of transparency. Five out of 13 tweets are in the "participation and transparency" sub-category. (Women: 5, Welfare: 1, Children's Rights: 1, Ecology and Environment: 1)

Tweets in categories other than "events" were not examined as they were not prominent. The dialogue category will be discussed below.

4.3.2 Tweet Categories of Üsküdar Municipality

Likewise, tweets and retweets shared by the Üsküdar Municipality were mostly from the “dialogue” category. But there was a significant difference in terms of the multitude of tweets by the Kadıköy Municipality and the Üsküdar Municipality

The Üsküdar Municipality’s tweets mostly included responses to users, but the main difference was its high number of tweets in the “promoting” category. The “promoting municipality and mayor” category includes tweets such as plans and projects by the Municipality, and visits as well as television and public appearances by the Mayor. The “Events” category, on the other hand, includes events that take place at specific times and days, where a special guest is invited.

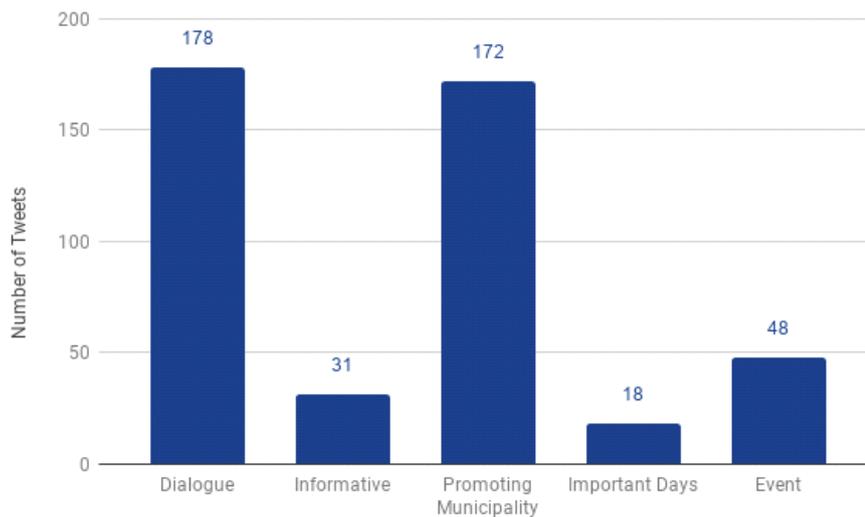
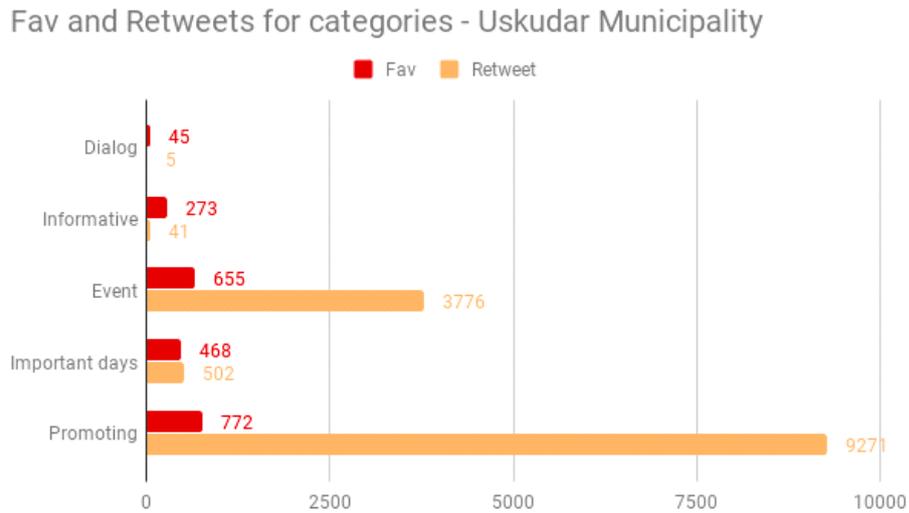


Figure 4.8 Categories of tweets/retweets of Üsküdar Municipality

Among the tweets in these categories, which are the most engaged the “promoting” and “event” categories are the most popular among the Üsküdar Municipality's tweets. In other words, the tweets that Üsküdar Municipality receives the most engagement are in the same categories with the tweets that they share the most. This shows that Üsküdar Municipality can attract the attention of its followers in certain tweets. It is

also necessary to look at the sub-categories of these two categories in relation to the results of their engagement efforts.



Figures 4.9 Number of fav/retweets of categories

Therefore, it would be appropriate to try to elaborate by looking at the sub-categories of the event and promoting municipality categories.

There are many sub-categories in the "Promoting Municipality", so a chart has been created taking into account the tweets of a certain number. It will be more meaningful to see the concentration in the most frequently tweeted. In addition, tweets that cannot be categorized and allocated to the "other" category are also removed from the chart.

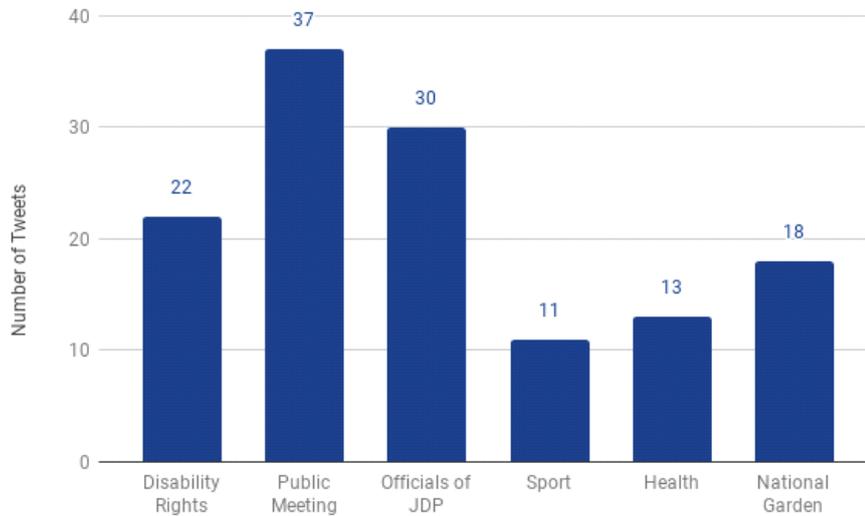


Figure 4.10 Sub-categories of “Promoting Municipality”

The prominent topics in the promoting category are public encounters, disabled rights, visits by JDP officials, National Gardens (Millet Bahçesi) and Health. Public meetings are particularly important because the Mayor routinely meets with young people, people from different neighborhoods and tells them what services they gave so far and will give in the future. Developments on the services are sometimes shared from the Municipality's account, and sometimes the tweets of the Mayor Hilmi Türkmen retweeted. Sharing the Mayor's visits on social media makes it more interactive and as it helps users feel part of them. Sharing the Mayor's public meetings online is also taking the interaction from the offline area and moving it online.

The reason why the “disabled rights” is at the second place in the promoting category is because of the Tebessüm Kahvesi (Smile Cafe) project. The cafe, which was opened on March 21, 2016 by the Üsküdar Municipality, employs 10 waiters and waitresses with Down syndrome (Tebessümkahvesi, 2019). This project, which was covered by the media many times, was one of the most important social responsibility projects carried out by the Üsküdar Municipality. Aiming to help people with Down syndrome to socialize and integrate with the society, the project attracted a lot of attention on social media as well. The project was frequently promoted through social media. It is important to increase the interaction and make the society a part of this social responsibility effort. It can be considered a positive effect that such a project, which is

supported by all segments of the society, is frequently shared from the accounts of the municipality to get attention to this project. Continuous sharing of such a socially responsible work on social media may also show something in terms of engagement.

The JDP official's sub-category holds an important place in both promoting and events categories. The Üsküdar Municipality, especially during the period of the election organized many public gatherings by inviting AK Party officials to made their Municipality' promotion. In addition, while sharing the services of the Municipality, the deputies and ministers are mentioned. But most importantly, in the events category, JDP's 2019 Local Election Istanbul Mayor candidate Binali Yildirim, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Erdogan's wife Emine Erdogan, Erdogan's daughter and Economy Minister Berat Albayrak's wife Esra Albayrak, Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu's visit and participation to the events and tweets about the events received much interaction on social media.

When looking at the sub-categories of the event category, it is seen that the JDP officials are at the forefront like promoting category. Then there are public meeting, art and "other" category. The reason for the same topics in both sub-categories is that the activities organized by the Municipality on a specific date are evaluated separately and the tweets that the Municipality describes the services during the last election process are evaluated separately. That's why it's the same subheading in the two sub-categories. For example; In the sub-category of promoting, there is also the National Garden. Under this category, the construction of the National Garden in Üsküdar, how much space it occupies, how services are provided promoted. However, in the National Garden tweets under the Events category, the days and times of an event to be held there were shared with the public.

4.3.3 Dialogue: Answers to Followers

If analyzing deeply the "answers" given by the municipality, it is possible to divide these answers into certain categories. In the thesis replies to users coded as a "dialogue".

The most important thing is that the answers give us the factors to be considered in terms of participation. Most of the answers are related to the fact that the question is transmitted to the teams. It is followed by tweets to inform users who have interacted with the Municipality on any topic. Informative tweets are followed by more information requests and methods of requesting access to the municipality by telephone.

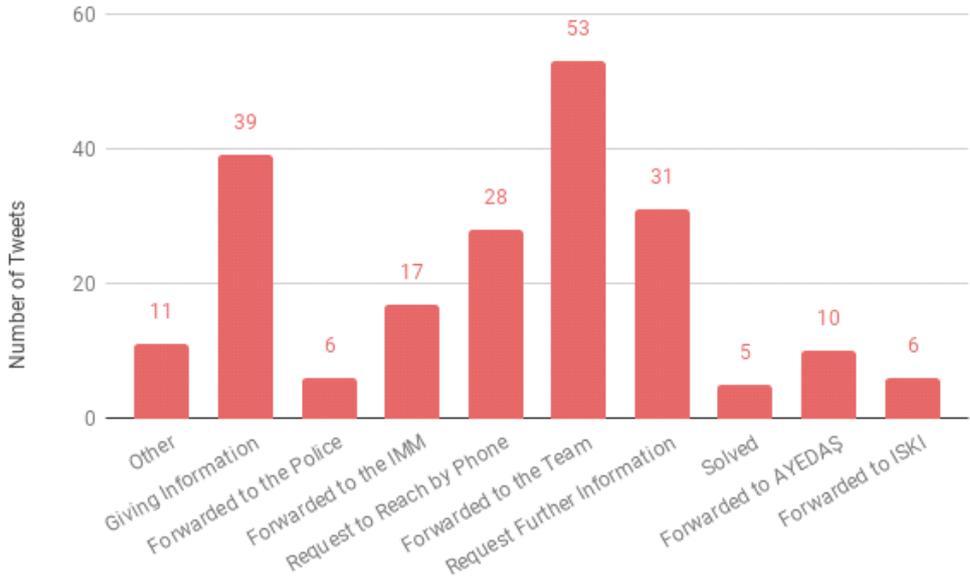


Figure 4.11 Sub- categories of dialogue - Kadıköy Municipality

In the sense of participation, it can be considered as a feature that increases the reliability and communication of the Municipality. The fact that Kadıköy Municipality’s one of the most popular tweets which telling the followers communicating with Municipality by phone shows that online participation practices should be reconsidered. The municipality tries to move user from the online space to offline to communicate. Putting one more step for listening the user’s problem and find solutions may be compromising communication continuity. However, the officials of the municipality said during the interviews that this situation protects the citizen legally and citizens should complete the bureaucratic stages in order to defend their

rights. It seems to be one of the “traditional” one-way communication methods established between the citizen and the municipality to file a complaint by telephone, to inform the necessary units and to respond within a certain period.

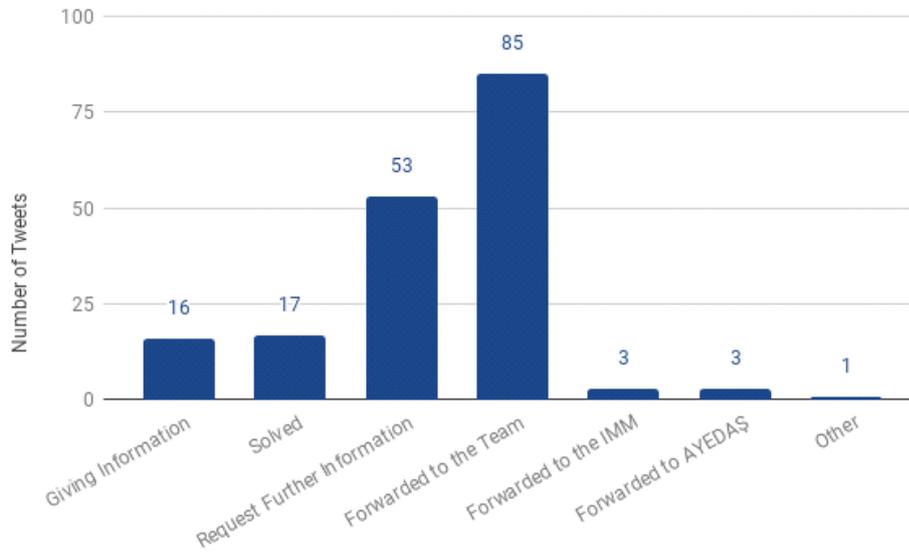


Figure 4.12 Sub- categories of dialogue - Üsküdar Municipality

Üsküdar Municipality transmitted the solution of the problem about the situations outside the authority of its own municipality to fewer other institutions and metropolitan municipality in comparison to Kadıköy Municipality. Most of the tweets of Municipality are about the transmission of the problem to the specific units.

The prominent categories of Üsküdar and Kadıköy Municipality and their sub-categories were tried to be shown briefly and how they could create differences in terms of engagement was briefly mentioned. However, the most important feature of Twitter, which is a social media channel in terms of participation, is “reply” and the responses given to users are collected under “dialogue” category. Dialogue is an advantage for citizens to have direct communication and contact with the municipality. However, if the municipalities are using this potential well, there will be significant differences. The largest share of the tweet by both municipalities belongs to the “dialogue” category. In other words, municipalities pay attention to responding to

users, as well as promoting themselves as well as trying to make communication interactive. Therefore, it is possible to examine how communication between citizens and municipalities is different between municipalities in terms of engagement, and how differences between communication and citizen engagement can be examined.

4.3.3.1 Differences in the Delegation of Authority in Social Media

When trying to explain the delegation of authority; the person who sends a request via Twitter to administration or district municipality, public officials can be respond these tweets by stating that the service area does not belong to the municipality' span of authority. In other words, it is a method of taking limited steps to find solutions by transferring responsibility and jurisdiction about the problem to another administrative group.

One of the important differences between Uskudar and Kadikoy Municipality is that the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality was in the JDP before the victory of Ekrem Imamoglu since 23 June 2019. Since the Üsküdar Municipality was also in the JDP, it can be said that the IMM has been able to achieve more solution-oriented results in matters falling within its service areas compared to Kadıköy Municipality. While Üsküdar Municipality communicates directly to İMM and share this information with its followers, Kadikoy Municipality generally warns and try to mobilize users to communicate with IMM.

Hello there. This situation was communicated to IMM Marine Services. We will intervene as soon as possible. We wish you a nice day. @ibbdeniz @ibbBeyazmasa

@ilgaz_mst @hilmiturkmen34 Hello there. Garbage cans will be placed in the mentioned area by our Metropolitan Municipality in the coming days. For your information.

When UM was talking about IMM as its own municipality, it gives the signal that they can be facilitated in terms of authority and brings a sense of ideological partnership.

In an in-depth interview with the Kadikoy Municipality's social media team, the team said they had problems about solving and speeding up some issues in the Kadikoy district during the JDP's power at the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.

It is also related to the structure of Twitter. Twitter did not show our answers in the stream. Mutual dialogue was not visible since several months ago. It encourages people to make a special comment on the devolution. People who feel like writing something as a duty. We realize that it is unpleasant when you give the same answers to the same question. AYEDAŞ, İSKİ, İGDAŞ, Telecom related issues are not very serious. There are certain problems and it can resolve very quickly, and citizens understand quickly the problems. However, reactions become a political issue in relation to IMM. The process is progressing politically. Metropolitan Municipality's attitude is becoming coincident with ours. There are changes in IMM areas and our own areas in our region. Main arteries in general and beaches for example is in the IMM area. IMM is not very helpful in this regard. Marmaray, Kurbağalıdere is in the hands of the IMM, but IMM has never made it easier for Kadıköy. (K1)

The bureaucratic process itself can be complex for those who reach their municipalities through social media and raise their problems. A high level of participation is required to know the area of responsibility of the metropolitan municipality, as well as the area of responsibility of the district municipality. A citizen who feels responsible can also see whether their own word is being listened with the transparency of the processes and the increase in confidence. Thus, it wants to take part in the decision-making processes by overcoming one-way communication with the municipality. However, a citizen who is not involved in these processes can do so by conveying it to the institution they think will solve the problem. What is important here is to give those who want to be part of the solution a chance in social media and make them more active citizens in offline spaces. Because participation primarily lies in two-way communication.

One of the main factors highlighted by those working on civic participation and engagement is the well-informed of the citizen. The fact that citizens are constantly asking the same questions and not knowing which authority is in their field from the fact that they do not know the authority and conditions of administration. Lack of permanent solutions for this makes it difficult for the citizens to understand their areas

of responsibility and less informed citizens may be shier about participating in decision-making processes.

The reason for the difference in terms of citizen engagement is that the users may be more likely to interact with a municipality that solves the problem for them. Citizens who sees that their problem has been solved and that the municipality has responded and can exercise their authority can make a request and suggest again. In addition, a sense of trust in the municipality will increase as their expectations are met. This is where local governments and communities aim to reach participation in network society.

Üsküdar Municipality's social media followers survey conducted on the citizens of the municipality with these tools to investigate whether the trust has been increased. According to the surveys, the largest group (48.2%) of the users following the Municipality account are those who use Üsküdar Municipality's Twitter account to convey their request. In this study, it was also tried to learn how the social media affects the trust and sympathy of respondents with the survey. More than half (56.1%) of the participants think that Twitter shares increase their trust and sympathies in Üsküdar Municipality. Respondents who say “some” 29.4%. 8.7% answered no, 5.8% did not notice. In the light of these results, the researcher concluded that Üsküdar Municipality's Twitter account increased trust and sympathy, but it should be borne in mind that the survey conducted with 500 people was conducted in 2012.

At the same time, the uniformity of the answers may cause the user to think that he is talking to a robot instead of a human being. For networks based on relational communication must be two-way. It was also mentioned in Chapter 2 of the thesis that the form of communication that would increase participation was supposed to be communicative and two-way. For this reason, the automatic, stereotyped, standard answers given are similar to traditional one-way communication. Although the social media platform itself is open to dialogue, it is not possible for citizens to remain engaged unless successful communication is established.

4.3.3.2 Online Political Polarization and Engagement

Regarding the delegation of authority, Üsküdar Municipality has a communication and relation with the IMM officials with an ideological affiliation. When looking at Twitter posts by municipalities, it can be witnessed that Üsküdar Municipality frequently expresses its relationship with its party.

Unlike Kadıköy Municipality, Üsküdar Municipality shared tweets about the relation between Municipality and JDP. Especially during this one-month period, the activities of JDP officials with the Municipality have an important place among the posts. However, political contents are not found in Kadıköy Municipality' account. In any way, Kadıköy Municipality does not emphasize its ties with RPP. KM account did not share a tweet about the visits and activities of the Republican People's Party leaders or officials.

The reason for the high interaction of Üsküdar Municipality may be that the channels such as Twitter are determined by dynamics such as polarization and the users are involved in partisan feelings. Because when the Municipality shares tweets with the JDP politicians, it is more possible to retweets and likes with these partisan feelings. Therefore, the more politically engaged JDP municipality can reach a more homogeneous group, the more likely the Municipality's posts could get more interaction within such a group.

Although the informative content of UM's services on Twitter may seem important, tweet that received the most sharing within 1 month include visits by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Emine Erdoğan and Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Candidate Binali Yıldırım to the district during the election process. One of the important social media impact has created by the municipality on social media is the Tebessüm Kahvesi project with Down Syndrome employees. The most interactive tweets that are non-political and based on the services of the municipality are related to Tebessüm Kahvesi. This is due to the fact that all parts of society can jointly defend these rights and advocacy groups from different political perspectives can support it.

Table 4.6 Most Engaged Tweets of Üsküdar Municipality

Tweet	Category	Tweet Type	Owner of Tweet
Dünya sizin tebessümünüz ile güzel. #DownSendromu	Promoting Municipality	Retweet	Twitter account of Gönül Belediyeciliği
Bugün, benim için özel bir yere sahip, 'çocukluğum, gençliğim' demek olan Üsküdar'da, Üsküdarlılarla biraraya gelmekten mutluluk duydum. @uskudarbl	Event	Retweet	Emine Erdoğan (The wife of President Erdoğan)
Eşsiz tarihi eserlerin ve doğal güzelliklerin mekanı #Üsküdar'ın değerine değer katmaya, gönül bahçelerinde hasbihâl etmeye geliyoruz. Tüm vatandaşlarımızı bekliyoruz.	Event	Retweet	Binali Yıldırım (JDP Candidate of İMM)
Haydi Üsküdar! Milletimizin gözbebeği, Anadolu'nun yiğit evladı, Cumhurbaşkanımız Sn. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan yarın bizimle olacak. 19 Mart Salı saat 18:00'de Üsküdar Meydan'da gerçekleşecek büyük buluşmaya herkesi bekliyoruz.	Event	Retweet	Hilmi Türkmen (Mayor of Üsküdar Municipality)
Dünkü Down Sendromu Farkındalık Günü'nden günün özeti bir görüntü. Rabbimin hediyesi en güzel çiçeklersiniz siz.	Promoting Municipality	Retweet	Hilmi Türkmen (Mayor of Üsküdar Municipality)

When we look at the most interactive tweets of Kadıköy Municipality in a month, it is noticed that they generally share tweets on social issues. KM's most influential tweet is the "Open Wardrobe" project based on solidarity economy. Sharing projects on social media, which encourage incentives for cooperation, can also be seen from the example of Tebessüm Kahvesi. The second most influential tweet is very important because it includes the introduction of a report of local government based on

participatory understanding. The other tweets that received the most interaction, then, shared the celebration of the important days that society considers valuable in terms of culture, art and labor.

Table 4.7 Most engaged tweets of Kadıköy Municipality

Tweet	Category	Tweet Type	Owner of Tweet
Açık Gardırop'un kapıları tüm Türkiye'ye açık 🙌 Kıyafetleri, ayakkabıları ve oyuncaklarını paylaşarak, dayanışmanın en güzel örneklerinden birini gösteren Kadıköylüler ile ihtiyaç sahibi kişiler arasında bir yardımlaşma köprüsü görevini sürdürüyoruz.	Promoting Municipality	Tweet	Kadıköy Municipality
Katılımcı anlayışla sürdürdüğümüz yerel yönetim modelimiz filizlerini verdi. Gelecek hedefleri, gerçekleştirilen çalışmaları ve geçmiş dönem planlarının değerlendirilerek, kurumların performansının ölçüldüğü "Entegre Raporlama" çalışması yapan dünyadaki ilk belediye olduk. https://t.co/DfkmPkm5xY	Promoting Municipality	Retweet	Aykurt Nuhoglu (Ex-Mayor of Kadıköy Municipality)
Gülümse Kadıköy #DünyaMutlulukGünü'nüz kutlu olsun 🙌	Important Days	Tweet	Kadıköy Municipality
Bir hayalden bir dünya kuranların #27MartDünyaTiyatroGünü kutlu olsun. Tiyatro Kadıköy'ün en güçlü damarıdır. 🙌	Important Days	Retweet	Aykurt Nuhoglu (Ex-Mayor of Kadıköy Municipality)
Potlaç Kadın Kooperatifi Kurulduuu 🙌 Kadıköy'de kadınlar dayanışmaya, birleştikçe güçlenmeye, bu güçleriyle büyümeye devam ediyor. Yeni adım kooperatif kuruluşuyla atılıyor. 8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü'nde Feneryolu Dükkanlar'da buluşuyoruz, bekleriz. 🙌	Promoting Municipality	Tweet	Kadıköy Municipality

Looking at the Kadıköy Municipality's tweets, there is no political emphasis, and it is seen that the tweets receive the most interaction from the services of the Municipality or on the issues that can be shared on all segments. Kadikoy Municipality's social media officers emphasize that they made a conscious choice about not taking a political attitude in the Twitter.

We are an institution paying attention to the issue of politicization. Although we have an opposing stance, we do not make the account political within ourselves. We want Kadikoy to have a voice. We do not evolve into a party situation. (K1)

We defend the living space in its most general form. Haydarpaşa protection, etc., not as a war of parties, not as a defense of living spaces. Even our opposition stance is a matter of living space. (K2)

Üsküdar Municipality's followers' desire to interact with the account seems to be based on political belonging, support and partisan feelings. Social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, but especially Twitter is pushing us to support our own views. The echo chambers and filter bubbles that social media networks put us in cause polarization and also feed this polarization. We want to hear and interact with people who are like us.

In general, the creation of public space can result from the fact that the negotiating environment cannot be established as desired. Individuals are always ready to communicate with those who are close to their views. The reason why communication is not always healthy is that it is open to polarization. The implications of political polarization in society like Turkey also clearly visible on the internet. Individuals may be quite far from Habermas' bargaining processes. It is also very important to talk about the barriers of the Internet environment to determine the agenda and increase participation in certain issues.

In news media, echo chamber is a metaphorical description of a situation in which beliefs are amplified or reinforced by communication and repetition inside a closed system. By visiting an "echo chamber", people are able to seek out information that

reinforces their existing views, potentially as an unconscious exercise of confirmation bias. This may increase political and social polarization and extremism.

However, echo chamber refers to the overall phenomenon by which individuals are exposed only to information from like-minded individuals, while filter bubbles are a result of algorithms that choose content based on previous online behavior, as with search histories or online shopping activity.

Twitter founder Jack Dorsey even said in a statement in 2018 that Twitter created filter bubbles and needed to be corrected. MIT Media Lab's research in 2018 showed how the filter bubbles on Twitter were separated by polarization.

When examining the map of the MIT Lab for Twitter users in Turkey, it is possible to see the different echo chambers. On the right of the map, Erdogan supporters are clustered and on the other side there are groups that called opposition. It is understood that the different political views shown in different colors are not transitive and only similar people follow each other. This means that we do not want to see different views either because of the algorithms or because of the echo chambers we created.

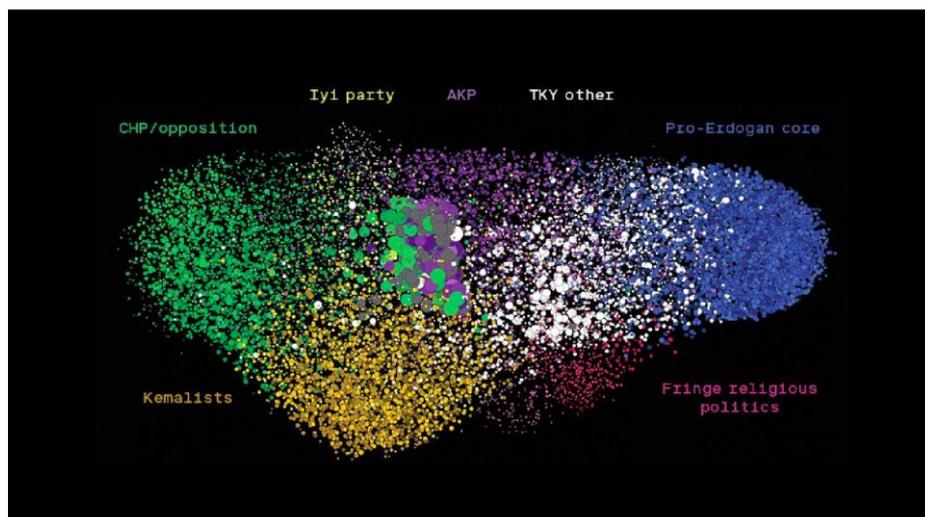


Figure 4.13 Echo-chambers among Turkish Twitter users

The importance of this in terms of local administrations is that a municipality should follow different strategies on social media in order to bring service to the fore and increase participation. It is very important that the municipalities try not to be the voice of the parties they are affiliated with or they may have to confront the fact that people on the opposite side. If municipalities do not pay attention to this, in the platforms such as Twitter, people who do not support the same party with the municipality contact them only to criticize their services and attitudes to society.

One of the reasons why the interaction of Üsküdar Municipality is so high is that it maintains this political identity and communicates with its followers with Municipality's political party agenda. The more the organization support its ideological mindset in the Twitter, the more likes and interactions get from their own echo chambers. However, when we evaluate the use of this polarizing dynamics of social media in terms of participation, it is not possible to say that Üsküdar Municipality can use social media channels well in terms of covering the support of different parties. Especially when the election results comparisons were taken into consideration, it is mentioned that the inhabitants of Üsküdar district were more heterogeneous than the people in Kadikoy. Excluding this heterogeneity in terms of supporting different parties may seem to benefit short-term interaction on a platform such as Twitter but may also lead to further detachment from the Municipality for the rest of the community who cannot hear their voice. Although the Municipality of Kadikoy is an RPP district with a much higher vote and has a more homogeneous voters, although it does not have a polarizing language, it can bring social media users closer to it and create an online community. Repeating similar studies in an environment where the number of followers and Twitter is much wider in terms of political participation may give more meaningful results.

Nah and Yamamoto emphasized the research which has shown that expressing opinions in online space are not always civil (Nah & Yamamoto, 2018). Because people do not know each other and their identities which decrease the inhibition of users. However, these ideas contribute to networks and help citizens to increase opportunity to learn different viewpoints.

4.3.3.3 Lack of Mechanisms Against Unanswered Questions / Requests

Unfortunately, there is no structure that controls the complaint if someone does not get a response on Twitter. Municipalities also have their own bureaucratic grievance mechanisms and they must be more transparent. However, in today's communication practices, it is as difficult and lagging to say to a citizen who publicly announces the issue that he wants to draw attention to and run the complaint mechanism via Twitter to not to do this. Using the tools in the most effective way, being able to handle every job from a single medium is a method preferred by individuals whose life is facilitated by technology. Therefore, the lack of bilateral supervision on Twitter is something that disrupts communication.

The municipality demands the use of its own communication channels, while the user wants to use the easiest method. The users have to follow up the requests and there is no legal obligation to respond. In fact, the citizen who expresses themselves in social media cannot legally protect themselves. When a public subject that important for everyone in the society discussed in the closed networks of the municipalities is problematic. Because beyond the meetings and services, citizen need to share the problems publicly for the sake of the community. Whether Twitter is the right platform for this is a matter of separate discussion, but it has the power to create campaigns, generate activism, and make individuals more engaged in urban problems.

Communication and interaction with the followers of both municipalities and district residents on Twitter is limited. The problems which mention by citizens are generally about broken roads and pavements, collecting garbage, vehicles on the sidewalks, dangerous construction sites. Municipalities are trying to respond to complaints submitted under these headings, but they are informed that they have been concluded in a very limited number. Both municipal followers react occasionally to non-response. They stress the same problems repeatedly.

-Good days! still no improvement, people will be hurt we will get upset, please take immediate action.

- It would be nice if you would let me know that you are taking these messages into consideration.
- Pavement in this situation for months @kadikoybelediyesi
- The pit on the bridge has been standing there for two days, does it have to fall on someone for you to close it?
- I applied for aggressive animals in our neighborhood. Please help last night they attacked a lady.
- This is probably my 50th tweet to you here, you still have not produced a solution, you could not. Events, accidents, fights are happening here every day.. nothing to say @uskudarblld Mimar Sinan Quarter İsmail Dümbüllü Street.
- I did not return to the request I still have. It's been 2 days and you haven't sent the team. Thank you for your attention
- Brother, Selami ali efendi street cannot be walking from the trash. We're going through at the middle of the street. Should someone hit the car and die?

As the examples show, there is no monitoring mechanism for the response on Twitter. Municipalities can turn this uncontrollably into their own advantages, but they can also lead to an unexpected social media response. Internet and these new social media platforms give a chance to the citizens to demand more transparent and accountable local administrations. Citizens can use these communication tools as a participation and to hear their voice to local administrators. Individuals need to be informed to participate.

The expectations of the services directed to the municipality through social media may be building trust between the citizens and the municipality. For a more engaged society, of course, communication needs to go beyond the service expectation. In other words, it is necessary to pave the way for being a more active citizen who wants to intervene in decision-making practices. However, the increase in the channels of communication with the municipality can be considered important, at least for gaining trust. It will be motivating for the citizens to see that someone is listening them to solve their problems and give responsibility.

Election can be used as a “stick” on social media to take an attention by citizens. In the following tweets that can be cited as an example, users also use the complaints they make to the Municipalities via Twitter as a vote threat. Interacting with the municipality on Twitter, the requesting engage user likewise says that meeting these

demands will affect the voting behavior. Therefore, a healthy communication and service method can increase the likelihood of winning votes for municipalities.

No change since my first message. It's been 12 days. It is a shame to remember that garbage collection and cleaning, which is one of the main duties of the municipality, and the placing of garbage cans in such a touristic area. Let's not see the value of the votes we give.

(Following this tweet on 13 March 2019, Üsküdar Municipality shared the photos with the tweets that problem solved on 14 March 2019.)

There are many reasons for such an uncontrolled environment. The fact that municipalities do not take social media channels seriously and that social media platforms have limitations. However, in terms of citizens and civic engagement, it is very important that people who face similar problems try to find a collective, holistic solution together and that this is taken into consideration by the municipalities. Now the internet and online platforms are a part of our lives and the use of technologies that make life easier for citizens is critical for municipalities. At this point, a kind of “ombudsman method” can be introduced which will be explained in more detail in the conclusion of the thesis.

When the tweets of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipality are examined, it becomes difficult to see the trust-based relationship of the network that highlights the community. At the core of the network, there should be a heterarchical relationship, not a hierarchical one, but both municipalities maintain a hierarchical relationship on Twitter in terms of their essence. Another point is that the network needs to be more open to two-way communication, but it does not happen, which basically shows us that interaction-based communication does not continue. According to the engagement rate of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipality, the unilateral informing posts of the municipalities received significantly more engagement.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5. 1 Summary and Policy Implications

The thesis aimed at problematizing the Twitter environment as a potential means of civic engagement and participation. To this aim, Twitter practices of Kadıköy and Üsküdar Municipalities have been analysed. These two municipalities were chosen because of the fact that, Kadıköy Municipality has the highest number of followers, and Üsküdar Municipality receives the highest level of engagement, also use Twitter to engage with the citizen in different ways.

In the literature, the participation of municipalities through social media usage is discussed in similar studies with a conviction that municipalities should be more participatory and democratic to enhance the social harmony in the society. Participation is based on transparency, openness, and two-way communication. Given the power of the Network to determine relationships today, it is worth exploring how its participatory nature can be used optimally.

Coming together on platforms such as Twitter, the community can express itself more efficiently, create social movements, and develop activism in these ways and try to influence decision-making processes.

In the discussions about the Network as the new public sphere, research has focused on this area. However, with the existing structure of the Internet and social media tools, it is far from becoming a truly a public sphere. Potentials of such media might be immense, but to realize this potential requires both authorities and citizens try hard.

The interaction of the municipalities on social media does not yield a single result. The structure of network societies, the algorithms and polarizing effects of social media platforms should always be kept in mind. It is necessary to know that the working structure of technology companies as well as the local authorities are directed towards the content that they are familiar with. Therefore, the community itself should be able to overcome these obstacles and build a trust-based structure. If this structure is established, we can say that the Internet can create a public sphere. Otherwise, the hierarchical, one-way communication between local authorities and citizens will continue.

When we look at the existing network structures, both citizens and municipalities find different obstacles to benefit from the using social media as a public sphere. These obstacles are related to the structure of the Network, the structure of Internet platforms of technology firms, and the perception of domination of the authoritarian governments. The first of these obstacles is the laws of the web as quoted by Dijk (Van Dijk, 2012). According to Dijk, these rules sometimes act as an advantage and sometimes as a disadvantage.

One of the structures of the Internet that is far from being a public sphere is digital authoritarianism. Censorship mechanisms are one of the biggest obstacles to free and equal participation. Governments may intervene to prevent social inconvenience due to their political position. It is not possible to talk about a "market freedom" that could stand in the way of governments and the Internet and social media platforms that everyone expects to participate freely in the framework of Habermas (Jurgen Habermas, 1991). Another disturbing thing about the concept of public sphere idealized by participation is the inequality in Internet access. It is also possible to describe this inequality on the Internet as a digital divide. Although the number of Internet users and the amount of usage increase with each passing day, not everyone has the same access to the Internet, and they do not have the same motivations. There is inequality between developed and underdeveloped countries in accessing information. In addition to these inequalities, individuals' cultural motivations may not be at the same level for using social media platforms or the Internet. The best example

is the difference between the JDP and the RPP voters in terms of how much they utilize the Internet and social media platforms in Turkey.

Is it not possible to talk about a participatory, democratic network and two-way communication despite these adverse conditions? It is possible. The mechanisms behind the free structure of the Network have not yet created a participatory social network. However, it has the potential. Powell describes the existing relationship and promotional structures that networks can build a trust-based community. Hierarchy and market relations are not effective in the Network. Communication is relational and has an open-ended tone. Although this interferes with these relationships, both Habermas' public sphere and Powell's trust-based community have the potential and characteristics to become real. However, it is useful to review the mechanisms of these relations and the channels through which communication takes place. It is possible to meet the democratic demands of citizens in terms of participation in fulfilling the community's expectation of trust. At this point, the most crucial point that the thesis aims to put forward is the need to include a third actor in the relationship between the administrator and the citizen to make the Network democratic and participatory.

At this point, we need to take advantage of George Simmel's triad concept. Simmel says that a societal relationship cannot be realized through dyad, adding that a third actor can have a controlling, balancing effect on society (Simmel, 1898).

In the thesis, an investigation was made on Twitter to understand whether this communication based on the third eye can develop in existing social media channels. The differences in the way the Kadıköy and Üsküdar municipalities highlight different points in terms of participation. We also checked whether the communication and engagement with the citizen were based on trust and two-way communication. However, according to the tweet analysis conducted with the content analysis method used in the thesis, it is difficult to say that communication is two-way and to claim that it has a participatory feature.

The difference between the level of engagement and the number of followers of Üsküdar and Kadıköy Municipalities were tried to be explained. The existing literature reveals some factors regarding the general structure of Kadıköy and Üsküdar. The factors that are thought to affect participation are demographic characteristics, political belonging, number of shares in social media, education. When we look at the demographic characteristics of Kadıköy and Üsküdar, there is not much difference between them. Besides, there was a difference in political parties; it was not concluded that participation was a vital factor.

The fact that the Kadıköy Municipality, which has a more homogeneous voter but less engagement and the Üsküdar Municipality despite has a more heterogeneous voter and higher level of engagement on Twitter. Also, the rate of RPP and JDP voters using the Internet should be kept in mind when considering the effect of social media. In the literature, there is no study directly supporting the idea that political parties have different effects. Studies have reached different conclusions regarding left and right political views. Another difference compared is the type of content that the municipalities share on social media. Although there is a difference between them, no conclusions have been reached in terms of their positive contribution to the participation in this thesis. Further investigations can be made by considering other factors that may have an impact.

Therefore, the content analysis method was the basis of the research part of the thesis. What kind of differences and similarities in communication is achieved through a detailed examination of the tweets? The fact that municipalities are getting more interaction with the users does not show that it is a direct participatory process. One of the things that the thesis also tries to put forward and underlines continually is that getting too much engagement does not show a direct participatory strategy.

In the content analysis part that was done using the coding method, the most critical topic to pay attention to was dialogue. Twitter has different forms of dialogue between users, so the municipality has the chance to use these different forms of dialogue. However, when we look at the answers given as an indicator of the communication

established by the municipalities with the users, it becomes clear that this form of communication does not open many doors to a democratic, participatory, two-way communication. Dialogue is the most popular tweet category for both municipalities. In other words, municipalities use Twitter enough to respond to users. As a result of detailed analysis of the answers given, the following conclusions were reached:

- **Delegation of authority:** Particularly, the issue of delegation of authority, which is more common in Kadıköy Municipality's tweets, is based on the forwarding the questions and requests asked by the citizens to another institution or municipality. The user, who is directed to a different institution, gets the idea that his / her municipality cannot find a solution. Citizens who do not know enough about their jurisdictions are directed directly to the Twitter account of another institution, but municipalities do not try to change behavior of citizens in an informative way. The fact that the Üsküdar Municipality could better deal with the Istanbul MM under the JDP administration and solve the problems more quickly is a conclusion from the tweets since the period before the 2019 Local Elections was examined. As a result, it can be said that users take a negative attitude on social media towards delegating authority regarding the problems they complain about.
- **Online political polarization:** Another important point identified after the tweet reviews is that municipalities use Twitter as their political party instruments. Twitter itself is a very political field and, due to its technological structure, has the potential to polarize people. Users who follow people who are close to their own opinions feed their anger about disagreement in this platform day by day. Even though the social media platform itself is open to dialogue and participation, the consequences of political polarization are fed on this platform. The Üsküdar Municipality also takes advantage of this polarization when using the municipal account. The Kadıköy Municipality's Twitter account does not show any posts about the RPP or RPP politicians, while the majority of the tweets that the Üsküdar Municipality receives the highest level of interaction are related to JDP officials. Given the structure of

Twitter based on echo chambers, the use of Twitter as a political tool by JDP officials has a polarizing effect. The Üsküdar Municipality has a much more heterogeneous constituency. Fifty percent of voters support a different party, indicating that a municipality should be more inclusive. However, the Kadıköy Municipality, which has a much more homogeneous voter, pays attention to not share tweets with political content. Thanks to the poles and parties created, more interaction may be received, but this does not indicate that the interaction is participatory.

- **Lack of mechanism for unanswered/pending requests:** When the messages sent to both municipalities are examined, it is seen that the users do not always respond to the problems and demands they have identified at the same speed. Users report a long-time issue via Twitter, and after a while, send another message stating that they have not received it. Unfortunately, no mechanism allows citizens to check messages that indicate a problem and have no response for months or days. Unless there is an answer from the municipality's social media account, the citizens continue to raise the problem that has not been solved online. However, among the very high number of messages, there is a risk that this demand will not be seen and disappear. The users cannot make their voice heard, cannot get an answer, and if the problem is solved, they never know if they have an impact on the decision of the local administrative. However, for a more engaging form of communication, users need to be included in the solution as well as in the problem. The lack of control here points to the need for a third actor to form the final proposal of this thesis.



Figure 4.14 The results and suggestions to dialouge of Municipalities’ Twitter

Considering these factors that prevent the good progress of communication, the necessity of adding a third actor to the communication between the local government and the citizen arises. An independent structure such as an ombudsman, who is capable of thinking in this abstractness, should balance the hierarchical relationship established, convey demands and requests in a bargaining form of communication within the framework of Habermas, be transparent and be able to force local governments to respond to expectations.

Municipalities should avoid polarizing and political influence while increasing interaction. Polarized interaction causes remaining users to refrain from participation, indicating that social participation cannot succeed. There are also benefits in the participation of local governments in addressing social media strategy. While 72 percent of Turkey’s population uses the Internet, the ratio of active social media users is 53 percent. In order to benefit from many research-proven online participations methods, municipalities need to determine strategies by considering the limitations of social media.

As a result of the research conducted on Twitter by two most followed and engaged municipalities in Istanbul and the other studies conducted in the field help to understand participation in social media. The author of the thesis reveals that these preventive reasons should be eliminated, and a participatory communication based on

trust should be established. A successful participant and civic engagement-enhancing model does not seem to be possible under the existing circumstances. A third actor needs to change the hierarchy and non-societal relationship between the municipality and citizens. This unequal form of relationship can be controlled, balanced, and transformed to the benefit of the community. The citizens need the help of a third actor whom they know will protect them against both hierarchies and the market. The relationship must be in a structure that is open to a triadic relation. In short, this third actor can be called an Online Participatory Ombudsman. The Ombudsman may seek to be a means of securing the community's trust-based structure. The citizen must be in a position to submit both requests and complaints, participate in decision-making processes and at the same time be able to supervise all these transparently. Every relationship the citizen establishes with the municipality is transformed into a relationship that the municipality has with authority due to its hierarchical features. Even if the relationship itself is based on trust, asymmetric structure of it will not provide enough space for mutual relations.

Considering that the use of mobile devices is increasing day by day, more time should be spent on mobile which can be considered as an engagement method. According to App Annie's 2018 data, Turkey ranks among the top 10 countries in the mobile app market. The increase in the app market points out to high application download rates and use habits in Turkey. Municipalities should also try to find suitable solutions.

Briefly, this thesis tries to contribute on subject of social media and participation;

- Study shows engagement numbers are not sufficient to understand participation.
- This study presents a new model by discussing the public sphere debate in terms of local government and network: Ombudsman method
- It reveals three new concepts by examining the ways of municipalities communicate on Twitter.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

Different online methods to increase participation can be explored in more depth and adapted to the ombudsman method. Suggestions on what can be done in the future after technical limitations are exceeded will be presented below.

Sentiment analysis method could be conducted for the users' replies to the municipality to draw a result based on trust and interaction, but one of the biggest obstacles is that the sentiment analysis does not work well in Turkish. Sentiment analysis is the process of computationally identifying and categorizing opinions expressed in a piece of text, especially in order to determine whether the writer's attitude towards a particular topic, product, etc. is positive, negative, or neutral.

The lack of a monitoring mechanism is damaging people's "trust." People who reaches the municipality through social media think that they will get answers and find solutions. However, they face with a lack of solution and the expectation of problem-solving gradually decreases. This can naturally lead to less engaging citizens and less trust in the municipality. To conclude these comments, a survey would have been more successful for strengthening the thesis, but the difficulty in reaching out to people is one of the limitations.

Increased interaction, according to media types, can be identified and applied in future studies, which can help establish a more participatory communication. It is seen that neither municipalities benefited from the polls feature of Twitter during a month of detailed examination. With the polls feature, the followers answer questions, and the opinions of the followers about a decision concerning the municipality can be collected. However, since neither municipality use this method, it could not be discussed whether the poll feature had a positive effect on participation. Differences between municipalities conducting polls can be examined through different studies.

These two municipalities were only reviewed for their Twitter accounts in terms of social media. It should also be checked on whether municipalities have different

impacts on other online platforms. For example, when we look at the section, where people can submit their complaints or suggestions or thank the officials, on the Kadıköy Municipality's website, we see that too much information is requested and it is not user-friendly. It is possible to say that it is not designed for users' Internet habits.

Therefore, it is difficult for users to make complaints and requests by using existing online practices outside of social media channels. Clicking on the links in the mobile application section of the site does not open any application or find any application of the Kadıköy Municipality in the application markets. Besides, when looking at the Üsküdar Municipality, it was found that there were problems in the functioning of the request and suggestion section on their website. However, the Municipality has an application, and citizens can state their location information and add a photo to send the municipality. It is an important topic to see how much this application can be used to suit users' online behavior. Within the framework of the thesis, these data have not been examined in terms of participation.

For a more democratic and participatory local government, it is necessary to understand the citizens' online habits and to provide appropriate tools. In addition, to establish a social relationship, communication must be controllable and observable by a third actor.

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APPENDICES

A: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Globalleşme sürecinin içinde ulus devletin merkeziyetçiliğine karşı yerelleşme tezi geliştirilmiştir. Yerelleşmesinin temelinde tabana dayalı, katılımcı, yerel farklılıklara daha uygun, daha eşitlikçi, daha esnek ve çabuk çözümler üreten yeni bir yönetim anlayışı bulunur.

Akademik araştırmalar ve makalelerin pek çoğu sivil katılım anlamında inceledikleri şeffaflık ve hesap verilebilirlik gibi demokratik değerlerin artışının yönetimlerle vatandaşların işbirliği içerisinde hareket etmesine ve yurttaşların güçlendirilmesine bağlamaktadır.

Yurttaşların bilgilendirmesi ve kamu yönetimiyle iyi iletişim kurabilmesinin bugün en temel koşulu ise insanların hayatlarının içerisine giren ağlardan ve çevrimiçi alışkanlıklardan yararlanmak.

Siyasi partilerin, sivil toplumun ve kamunun bir arada farklı güç dinamikleriyle bulunabildiği internet, hükümetleri daha hesap verilebilir tutabilmek için bir yol olarak görüldü. Sosyal medyada ortaya çıkan hareketler ve tepkiler hükümetleri açıklama yapmak, ajandalarını değiştirmek zorunda bıraktı. Sosyal medyanın doğasını ve iletişim biçimlerini anlamak için içerisinde bulunduğumuz ağ toplumunu ve Enformasyon Çağı'nı iyi tarif etmek gerekir.

İnternet ortaya çıktığından beri potansiyelleri bakımından pek çok şey tartışıldı. Daha çoğulcu bir ortam olacağı, katılımcılığı artırabileceği ön plana çıkan başlıklar arasındaydı. Web 1.0 genel olarak etkileşimli içeriği sağlamayan, statik web sitelerinden oluşuyordu. Ziyaretçiler bilgiyi tüketmek için bu siteleri ziyaret ederdi ve

bilgi üretim sürecinin içerisinde yer alamazdı. Web 1.0 sıradan kullanıcıyı üretici tarafına geçirmeye imkan vermiyordu.

Teknolojistler, akademisyenler özellikle Web 2.0 olarak tanımlanan sosyal medya mecralarını içeren dönemin iletişim anlamında bilinen yöntemleri değiştireceğini ortaya koydular. Hayatımızın bir parçası haline gelen, gündelik işlerimizin pek çoğunu yapmak için bağımlı hale geldiğimiz internet ve sosyal ağlar birbirimizle iletişimin temelini oluşturmuş durumda. Bu nedenle de 21.yüzyıl pek çok kişi tarafından “ağlar çağı” olarak tarif edilmekte.

Toplumun farklı katmanlarındaki her bir birimini altyapılar sayesinde günden güne birbirine bağlayan toplumsal formasyonlar diye tarif edilebilecek olan ağ toplumları, yeni ortaya atılmış bir kavramsallaştırma olmasa da internetin hayatımıza daha doğrudan etki etmesiyle önemli hale gelmiştir.

Dijk ağ toplumunu anlayabilmek için toplumun içerisindeki ağ katmanlarının analiz etmek gerektiğini belirterek hiyerarşik ve heterarşik örgütlenme biçimlerini tarif eder. Heterarşik örgütlenme biçiminde alt seviyeler üst seviyelerle kısmen temas eder. Dijk tarihte ilk kez hiyerarşik ve heterarşik seviyeleri eş zamanlı olarak birbirine bağlayan bir iletişim aracı olarak internete sahip olduğumuzu söyler.

Bizi birbirimize bağlayan ve mevcut yapıları güçlendiren bu ağlar ve özellikle sosyal medya platformları en çok kamusal alan tartışması ekseninde ele alınmıştır. İnternet sıkça Jürgen Habermas’ın kamusal mekan kavramıyla özdeşleştirilir. Bu kamusal mekanda yurttaşlar serbestçe düşüncelerini ifade edebilir, ortak görüş ve çıkar etrafında bir araya gelerek tartışabilir.

İnternetle birlikte artık farklı kamusal alan tartışmalarının ortaya çıktığı söylenebilir. Habermas’ın *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* kitabında bahsettiği burjuva kamusal mekânı yerini modern toplumdaki ağlarla birbirine bağlı sanal ve hayali topluluklar doldurabilir.

Kamusal mekan tartışmalarının internetle birlikte ele alınması da internetin yarattığı katılımcı ve kendi sesini duyurmaya müsade eden yapısıyla düşünüldüğünde kaçınılmaz bir hale geldi. Habermasçı yaklaşıma göre, ideal bir kamusal mekan, kamusal tartışmaların özgür ve herkesin katılımına açık olduğu, bütün paydaşların eşit Kabul edildiği, hiçbir konu ve görüşün tartışmanın dışında bırakılmadığı bir yapıda olmalıdır. Ayrıca tartışmanın esas amacı ortak bir paydada buluşmak ve fikir birliğine varmaktır. (Habermas, 1989).

Habermas'ın ortaya koyduğu kamusal mekân tartışmalarının merkezinde de internetin demokratik bir ortam yarattığı fikirleri yer alır. İnternetin daha fazla insanın demokratik süreçlere katılmasına yardımcı olduğu yönündeki algı güçlenmiştir.

2010 yılında başlayan pek çok ülkeye yayılan Arap Baharı'nda demokratik taleplerini dile getirmek için bir araya gelen protestocular neler yaşandığını aktarmak ve taleplerini dile getirmek için sosyal medya ve internetin olanaklarından yararlanmıştı. Protestolar sırasında video ve fotoğraflar çekerek mobil cihazlarıyla sosyal medya platformlarında var olarak, mücadelelerini yaygınlaştırdılar. Otoriter rejimlerin yönetiminde kendilerini ifade edebilecek bir yer bulamadılar, geleneksel medya araçları seslerini duyurmak için uygun alanlar değildi. Sosyal medyanın kullanımındaki artışla birlikte, protestocular dünyanın dikkatini çekmeyi başarmıştı. Aynı şekilde Türkiye'de 2013 yılında gerçekleşen Gezi Eylemleri sırasında da protestocular sosyal medyayı kullanarak konu hakkında toplumsal bilinci artırmayı başarmıştı. İstanbul Gezi Parkı'nda ağaçların kesilmesine yönelik başlayan protestoların kısa bir süre içerisinde ülkenin tamamına yayılarak demokrasi taleplerine yönelik eylemlere dönüşmesi de internetin bu eylemlilikler açısından önemini ortaya koymuştu. İstanbul'da yoğun polis şiddetiyle karşı karşıya kalan göstericiler birbirlerini uyarmak, haberleşmek ve neler yaşandığını dünyaya duyurmak için Twitter'ı tercih etmişti. Türkiye'deki büyük medya kuruluşları protestolara yer vermediği için tepkiyle karşılanmış ve bugün hala devam eden medyaya duyulan büyük güvensizliği perçinleyen en büyük medya krizlerinden biri olmuştu. Twitter Gezi dönemi süresince kendine özgü bir dil oluşturmuş, yardımlaşma, katılım gibi toplumsal değerleri güçlendirmişti. Aynı zamanda da bireylerin hükümetlere

demokrasi taleplerini sunmak açısından olanaklar yaratmıştı. Kamusal mekan tartışmasını da güçlendiren bu eylemler medyanın kamuyu bilgilendirme konusunda sansüre maruz kaldığı ya da oto sansür uyguladığı dönemlerde sosyal medyanın ve internetin demokratik taleplerin kitlelere ulaşması konusunda yardımcı oldu.

Dijital otoriterleşmenin kamusal mekân tartışmalarına etkisi

İnternetin demokrasiyi geliştireceğini varsaysak da ulusların kontrol ve etki edebildiği ağlarda belirli sınırlılıklar yaratacağına da vurgu yapmak gerekir. İnternetin sosyal ve politik anlamda kullanımını demokrasiyi ne derece genişletebileceğinin de ipucunu gösteriyor. Kamusal alan tartışmaları içerisinde internet özgürlüğünü ve sansürü de mutlaka değerlendirmek gerekiyor.

Otoriter hükümetlerin interneti kontrol etmedeki gücünü anlatan Morozov, bu hükümetlerin gözlem için bu araçları kullanabileceklerini, sansür konusunda giderek marifet kazanacaklarını ve bu ağları kendi propaganda araçlarına dönüştürmenin yollarını bulduklarından bahseder. Hatta Morozov internetin demokratikleştirici potansiyelinin bir mit olduğundan bahseder.

Otoriter rejimler filtreleme ve sansürleme stratejileriyle enformasyon akışını kontrol altına alabilmektedir hatta bu sadece kendi ülkesinde değil sınırları aşan bir yapıya sahiptir (Deibert et al., 2008). Drezner bu noktada internetin gözetleme ve baskı aracı olarak kullanıldığına vurgu yapar.

Yukarıda bahsedildiği gibi otoriterleşme eğilimindeki ülkelerde İnternetin sansürle karşılaşması ve erişilebilirlik sorunu yaşaması kaçınılmazdır. Türkiye gibi demokratik anlamda güçsüz ülkelerde kullanım açısından yüksek olsa da kullanımın kontrol edilebilme potansiyeli açısından da incelenmesi gerekir. Toplumun yüzde 72'si internet kullanıyor dahi olsa internetin kendisinin özgür ve demokratik olabildiğinden bahsetmek güç. Çevrimiçi haber sitelerinin kapanması, sosyal medya paylaşımları yüzünden insanların tutuklanması oluşu, Vikipedi'nin Türkiye'de 2 yıldan fazladır

kapalı olması internetin özgür ve demokratik kabul edilebilmesinin önündeki engellerden.

Freedom House'un her yıl yayımladığı internet özgürlük raporuna göre Türkiye "not free" kategorisinde yer alıyor. 2018 yılında yayımlanan raporda 100 puan üzerinden değerlendirilen ülkeler arasında Türkiye 66 puanla 65 ülke içerisinde Venezuela ile aynı sırayı paylaşarak interneti özgür olmayan ülkeler arasında 12.sırada yer alıyor.

Raporda Türkiye'nin skorunun 2015'ten beri arttığını ve otoriterleşmenin bunda etkisi olduğundan bahsediliyor. Katılımcılık anlamında umut vaad eden Twitter gibi platformlar Gezi Protestoları sırasında Türkiye'de yükselişe geçmiş olmasına rağmen kısa bir süre içerisinde fişleme araçlarına dönüşmeye, kutuplaşmayı derinleştirmeye de başladı. Twitter gibi mecralarda anonim kalma şansına sahip olan kullanıcılar baskı hissettiği noktada bu şansı kullanarak platform içerisinde var olmaya devam etti. Ama bu anonimlik sorumluluğu da bir hayli azalttı böylece diyalog ve iletişim kurmanın kendisi güçleşmeye başladı. Türkiye'nin geneline yansıyan iktidar ve muhalefet bloklarının oluşturduğu kutuplar keskinleşti ve derinleşen kutuplaşma internete de sirayet etti.

Politik olarak kutuplaşmış platformlarda internete erişim konusundaki eşitsizlikler

İnterneti kullananların siyasi profillerine bakıldığında da aslında bu kutuplaşmanın halihazırda var olduğunu söylemek de mümkün. Sadece kendi gettosunun inandıklarını gören, izleyen, okuyan internet kullanıcısı var olan toplumsal gerçeklikten daha farklı bir gerçekliği yaşadığını bazı zamanlar fark edememekte. Özellikle Twitter'ın herkes tarafından ciddiye alınan bir yer olması, siyasetçilerin, devlet insanlarının bu platformdan birbirlerine cevap vermesi, toplumsal bazı olayların kıvılcımlarının buradan ortaya çıkması tartışmaların sınırlılığının görülmesine engel olabiliyor.

Ağ toplumlarında eşit şekilde katılım olmaması da yukarıda bahsedilen olayların temelinde yatıyor. Türkiye’de sosyal medya platformlarının özellikle de Twitter’ın önemli toplumsal başlıklarda tepkiyi doğurabildiği ve büyütebildiği bir gerçek ancak Twitter’ın toplumun tüm kesimlerini temsil ettiğini söyleyebilmek güç. Dijk’in ağ toplumundaki üç parçalı katılım şeması da bunu açıklamaya yardımcı oluyor.

KONDA tarafından yapılan araştırma tam da bu noktayı gösterebilmek açısından önemli. KONDA’nın Mayıs 2018 tarihli raporlarına göre;

AK Parti seçmenlerinin yüzde 36’sı internete hiç girmemekte. Türkiye 2017 genel seçmen ortalamasında internete hiç girmeyenlerin oranı yüzde 29. Buna göre, internet kullanımını AK Parti seçmenleri arasında Türkiye ortalamasından aşağıda. CHP’lilerin, sosyal medyayı Türkiye geneline kıyasla daha fazla kullandığı da raporun sonuçları arasında.

KONDA’nın raporu üzerine hatırlanması gereken bir kavram ise dijital uçurum. Dijital uçurum internete erişimi olanlar ve olmayanlar arasındaki boşluğu tarif eder. Dijk dijital uçurumu yeni medya içerisinde dört gruba ayırarak inceler; motivasyon, materyal veya fiziksel erişim, beceriler ve kullanımdır. İnternete eşitsiz şekilde erişen toplumun farklı nedenleri bulunur. Bunlar sadece maddi kaynak eksiklikleri olmayabilir. Birey yeni medyayı kullanacak zamana sahip olmayabilir ya da yeterli teknolojik bilgiye ve dijital medya okuryazarlığı seviyesine sahip değildir. Başka bir neden ise kültürel kaynaklardır yani insanlar internete ve bu ağlara erişmek için yeterli motive edici kültürel statülere sahip olmayabilir. Bütün bunlar da eşitsiz erişime neden olan sebepler arasında yer alır. Aslında bu erişim düzeylerindeki farklılıkta kamusal alan tartışmalarını düşünürken her zaman akılda tutulması gerekir.

Market, Hiyerarşi ve Topluluk

Dijk web 2.0’in kendisine özgü teknolojilere ve esnekliğe sahip yeni ekonomik bir perspektif yarattığını belirtir. Dijk’in ortaya koyduğu farklı organizasyonel ağ yönetimleri yerel yönetimler gibi örgütlenme yapılarını da kuşkusuz etkilemiştir.

Dijk'in akış ekonomisini besleyen en önemli teorilerinden birisi Walter Powel'in örgütlenme şekillerini karşılaştırdığı makalesidir. Powel bu makalede market, hiyerarşi ve ağlar karşılaştırması yapar. Powel ekonomik değişimin belirli sosyal yapısal bağlam içerisinde değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini savunur. Ayrıca daha sosyal ilişkilere, karşılıklı çıkarlara ve itibarlara dayalı olduğunu vurgular. Otorite tarafından da daha az tahakküm altında olduğuna kanaat getirdiğini belirterek ağların ekonomik aktivite olarak daha bütünlüklü konuşulabilmesini sağlayacak faktörleri belirlemeye çalışacağını anlatır. Ardından bu faktörlerin ağların sıklığı, dayanıklılığı ve kısıtlamaları hakkında tartışmalar üretmek için kullanılabileceğinden bahseder.

Powell'in örgütlenme modeli olarak ortaya koyduğu bu ekonomik çerçeveye sahip tablo ve yapı aslında bütüne bakıldığında tüm ilişkileri belirleyen bir şemayı da ortaya koymaktadır. Siyasi, sosyal, ahlaki, iletişimsel pek çok etkiye sahip bu örgütlenme yapılarına bakarken ağların güvene dayalı yapısını akılda tutmak gerekli. Bu tez için önem taşıyan yanı ise Google, Facebook, Twitter gibi platformlar ağ ekonomisinin parçası olan şirketlerdir. Bu şirketler en büyük ekonomiye sahip şirketler arasında ilk sıralarda gelmektedir. Kapitalist ekonomideki karlar bu şirketlerin parçası olduğu ağ ekonomisini uzun süredir beslemektedir. Bu platformlar içerik geliştirme ve reklam gelirleriyle ekonomide söz sahibi olmuşlardır.

Güven ve Toplum

Topluluğun güven beklentisini gerçekleştirmek katılım anlamında yurttaşların demokratik taleplerinin karşılık bulması mümkün. Bu noktada ise tezin ortaya koymayı amaçladığı en önemli nokta: ağları demokratik ve katılımcı yapabilmek için yöneticiler ve yurttaş arasındaki ilişkiye üçüncü bir aktörü dahil etme gerekliliği.

Bu noktada George Simmel'in "triad" kavramından yararlanmak gerekiyor. Sosyal bir ilişki "dyad" ile gerçekleşemez diyen Simmel üçüncü bir aktörün toplumu denetleyici, dengeleyici bir etkisi olabileceğini söyler.

Bu çalışmada Kadıköy ve Üsküdar Belediyeleri'nin Twitter'ın kullanım pratikleri üzerinden sivil katılım için uygun bir alan olup olmadığı tartışılmıştır. En çok takipçisi olan Kadıköy Belediyesi ve en fazla etkileşim alan Üsküdar Belediyesi'nin Twitter'ı kullanma şekilleri yurttaşla kurdukları etkileşimi de farklı şekillerde etkilemektedir.

Literatürde de benzer çalışmalarla belediyelerin sosyal medya kullanımları üzerinden katılım tartışılmaktadır. Daha demokratik toplumsal harmoni için daha katılımcı olmak esastır. Katılımcılık şeffaflık, açıklık ve iki yönlü iletişim gibi esaslara dayanır. Ağların bugün ilişkileri belirleme gücü dikkate alındığında doğasına içkin katılımcı yapısını en ideal şekilde nasıl kullanabileceği daha fazla araştırılmayı hak etmektedir.

Tezde Üsküdar ve Kadıköy Belediyelerinin arasındaki etkileşim ve takipçi sayılarının farkının neye dayandığı tespit edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Kadıköy ve Üsküdar'ın genel yapısı incelendiğinde mevcut literatürlerin de ortaya çıkardığı bazı faktörler bulunuyor. Katılımcılığı etkilediği düşünülen faktörler önceki çalışmalarda demografik özellik, siyasi aidiyet, sosyal medyadaki paylaşımlar, eğitim başlıkları şeklinde yer almakta. Kadıköy ve Üsküdar'ın demografik özelliklerine baktığımızda arasında çok fazla bir fark olmadığı görüldü. Ayrıca siyasi parti farkı olsa da bunun katılımcılığı etkileyici bir etken olduğuna ilişkin bir sonuca ulaşamadı. Daha homojen bir seçmen kitlesine sahip olan Kadıköy Belediyesinin sosyal medyada çok fazla takipçisi olmasına rağmen az etkileşim alıyor olması ve Üsküdar Belediyesi'nin daha heterojen bir seçmene sahip olmasına rağmen en çok etkileşimi alan belediye olması belirgin bir etkiye işaret edemeyeceğini bize gösteriyor. Ayrıca CHP ve AK Parti kitlesinin interneti kullanma oranlarının da bu etkiyi düşünürken akılda tutulması gerekiyor. Literatürde de siyasi partilerin farklı etkiler yarattığını doğrudan destekleyebilecek bir çalışma bulunmuyor. Çalışmalar sol ve sağ siyasi görüşlere ilişkin birbirinden farklı sonuçlara ulaşmış. Karşılaştırılan bir diğer farklılık ise belediyelerin sosyal medyada paylaştıkları içeriklerin medya tipleri. Bunlar arasında fark olsa da etkileşime olumlu katkıları açısından bir sonuca ulaşamadı.

Bu yüzden de tezin araştırma kısmının temelini içerik analizi yöntemi oluşturdu. İletişimde nasıl bir farklılık ve benzerlik olduğuna tweetlerin detaylı incelemesiyle

ulaşılmış oldu. Belediyelerin kullanıcılarla kurduğu iletişimde daha fazla etkileşim alıyor olması doğrudan katılımcı bir süreç olduğunu da göstermiyor. Tezin de ortaya koymaya çalıştığı ve sürekli altını çizdiği şeylerden birisi de fazla etkileşim almasının doğrudan katılımcı bir strateji gözetmediğini ortaya koyması.

Çalışmada kodlama yöntemiyle yapılan içerik analizi kısmında en çok dikkat edilmesi gereken yer ise “diyalog” yani “cevaplar” kısmıydı. Twitter kullanıcılar arası farklı diyalog biçimlerine sahip, bu nedenle de belediyenin bu farklı diyalog biçimlerini kullanma şansı da bulunuyor. Ancak belediyelerin kullanıcılarla kurduğu iletişimin göstergesi olarak verilen cevaplara bakıldığında bu iletişim şeklinin demokratik, katılımcı, iki yönlü bir iletişime çok kapı aralamadığı ortaya çıkıyor. Diyalog kategorisi iki belediye için de en çok atılan tweet kategorisi. Yani belediyeler Twitter’ı kullanıcılara cevap vermek için yeterince kullanıyor. Verilen cevapların detaylı incelemesi sonucunda ortaya belirli farklar çıkıyor.

- **Yetki devri;** Özellikle Kadıköy Belediyesi’nin tweetlerinde daha fazla rastlanan yetki devri meselesi vatandaşların Twitter üzerinden sorduğu soruları ve talepleri başka bir kuruma ya da belediyeye yönlendirmesine dayanıyor. Farklı bir kuruma yönlendirilen kullanıcı ise kendi belediyesinin buna çözüm bulamadığı fikrine kapılıyor. Yetki alanları konusunda yeterince bilgi sahibi olmayan vatandaşlar doğrudan başka bir kurumun twitter hesabına yönlendiriliyor ancak belediyeler informative bir yolla vatandaşları bilgilendirmeye de çalışmıyorlar. 2019 Yerel Seçimleri’nden önceki dönem incelendiği için Üsküdar Belediyesi’nin AK Part’nin yönetimindeki İstanbul BB ile daha iyi anlaşabildiği ve sorunları daha hızlı çözebildiği de tweetlerden yapılabilecek bir çıkarım. Sonuç itibariyle kullanıcıların yetki devredilen sorunlara ilişkin sosyal medyada olumsuz bir tavır takındığı söylenebilir.
- **Çevrimiçi siyasi kutuplaşma;** Tweet incelemelerinden sonra tespit edilen bir diğer önemli nokta ise belediyelerin Twitter’ı kendi siyasi parti enstrümanları olarak kullanmaları. Twitter’ın kendisi oldukça politik bir alan ve teknolojik yapısı gereği de insanları kutuplaştırma potansiyeline sahip. Kendi görüşlerine

yakın kişileri takip eden kullanıcılar anlaşılmadıklarına karşı duydukları öfkeyi de her geçen gün bu platform içerisinde besliyorlar. Sosyal medya platformunun kendisi ne kadar diyaloga ve katılıma açık dahi olsa siyasi kutuplaşmanın sonuçları bu platformda beslenerek karşımıza çıkıyor. Üsküdar Belediyesi de bu kutuplaşmadan yararlanarak belediye hesabını kullanıyor. Kadıköy Belediyesi'nin Twitter hesabında CHP veya CHP'li siyasetçilere yönelik herhangi bir paylaşım rastlanmazken Üsküdar Belediyesi'nin en çok etkileşim aldığı tweetlerin çoğunluğu AKP'li yetkililerle alakalı. Twitter'ın yankı fanuslarına dayalı yapısı göz önüne alındığında AKP'li yetkililerin siyasi bir araç olarak Twitter'ı kullanması kutuplaştırıcı bir etkiye sahip. Üsküdar Belediyesi ise çok daha heterojen bir seçmen kitlesine sahip. Seçmenlerin yüzde 50'si farklı bir partiyi desteklemekte ve bu da aslında bir belediyenin daha kapsayıcı olması gerekliliğini gösterir. Oysa ki çok daha homojen bir seçmene sahip Kadıköy Belediyesi siyasi bir içeriğe sahip tweet paylaşmamaya özen gösteriyor. Yaratılan kutuplar ve taraflar sayesinde daha çok etkileşim alınıyor olabilir ancak bu etkileşimin katılımcı bir yapıya sahip olduğunu göstermemekte.

- **Cevap verilmeyen talepleri denetleme mekanizması eksikliği;** her iki belediyeye de gönderilen mesajlar incelendiğinde kullanıcıların tespit ettikleri sorunlara ve taleplerine her zaman aynı hızda karşılık alamadıkları görülüyor. Kullanıcılar uzun bir süre önce çözülmesini beklediği sorununu Twitter aracılığıyla iletiyor ve bir süre sonra buna karşılık alamadığını belirten başka bir mesaj daha gönderiyor. Yurttaşların sorun belirten ve aylarca veya günlerce cevap alamadığı mesajları kontrol edebilecek bir mekanizma ne yazık ki bulunmuyor. Belediyenin sosyal medya hesabından bir cevap gelmediği sürece vatandaş çözüme kavuşmamış sorununu çevrimiçi platformda dile getirmeye devam ediyor. Ancak çok yüksek sayıdaki mesajlar arasında bu talebinin görülmemesi ve yok olup gitme gibi bir riski bulunuyor. Kullanıcı kendi sesini duyuramıyor, cevap alamıyor ve eğer sorun çözülüyorsa bunda kendi etkisinin olup olmadığını asla bilemiyor. Oysa daha etkileşimli bir iletişim şekli için kullanıcıların soruna dahil olduğu kadar çözüme de dahil edilmesi gerekir.

Buradaki kontrol mekanizmasındaki eksiklik bu tezin de nihai önerisini oluşturan üçüncü bir aktörün ihtiyacına işaret ediyor.

İletişimin sağlıklı ilerlemesinin önüne geçen bu etmenler düşünüldüğünde yerel yönetim ve yurttaş arasındaki iletişime üçüncü bir aktörü ekleme gerekliliği doğuyor. Ombudsman olarak tarif edebileceğimiz ve bu soyutlukta düşünebileceğimiz bağımsız bir yapının arada kurulan hiyerarşik ilişkiyi dengelemesi, talep ve istekleri Habermas'ın çizdiği çerçevede pazarlık ederek bir iletişim şekliyle aktarması, şeffaf olmak ve yerel yönetimleri beklentilere cevap vermek zorunda bırakabilmesi gerekir. Belediyeler etkileşimi arttırırken kutuplaştırıcı siyasi etki yaratmaktan kaçınmalıdır. Kutuplaşmış hale gelen etkileşim geriye kalan kullanıcıların hiçbir zaman katılamamasına neden olur ve bu da toplumsal katılımın başarıya ulaşamayacağını göstergesidir. Ayrıca yerel yönetimlerin sosyal medya stratejilerini katılım ekseninde ele alırken Türkiye'de internet kullanımının yüzde 72'yken aktif sosyal medya kullanımının nüfusun yüzde 53'ünü oluşturduğunu akıllarında tutmalarında fayda var. Etkisinin olduğu pek çok araştırmayla kanıtlanmış çevrimiçi katılım yöntemlerinden yararlanabilmek için belediyelerin sosyal medyanın sınırlılıklarını düşünerek strateji belirlemesi gerekir.

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