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Social Media and Network Society – I:
Changes in Mass Communication
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PREFACE

While Generators of 'Image of Authority' Change

In the modern world, it is obvious that a change has been going on in routine practices in and theoretical approaches toward the field of mass communication. Technical developments based on Internet and Informatics, new tools, means and opportunities of communication provided by digital data transmission, expansion of electronic infrastructure, and possible new technologies that may emerge during transcription of this paper shake the hegemony of mainstream means of communication and media. Events indicate a radical change in the system and structure of mass communication due to deviation from known practices of manufacturing and distribution. Considering the development of technology conventional media feeds on which took place in the last century, and the last quarter-century in which mass media has reached its peak, it seems that the current change will irrevocably bring new communication and media practices and applications. Although it seems that majority of media contents are consumed daily in urban centers through tools of traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television and cinema, tendency of content consumption rapidly shifts to digital tools and Internet-based communication platforms. Most studies report that the list of media tools and platforms followed daily sees a tendency toward consuming the content shared via Internet and using computers and mobile communication tools, particularly among the young, highly educated and urban population.

New communication tools and platforms change the world we live in. These tools and platforms are faster and more personal and massive than all tools of traditional communication, have a higher ability to send, combine and distribute all contents via any medium, and decentre the dominant associations relating to content generation so that these associations cannot create power fields in the new market system, and undermine all fields of competence and authority of the state, civil life and individual. "Social Media", which is the main topic of our book, and new communication technologies and digital communication tools and platforms it is based on distort the perception of dominant social, cultural and political structures, and thus, gears of content factories are broken which enable the creation of power centers in the state-, politics- and economy-based organizational areas of the society, and lifestyles are changed radically. New communication technologies break the media contents into pieces, as well as the method of production and distribution thereof, and they crystallize the content market by means of new opportunities brought by digital data transmission rate and variety. Vision of the new man has expanded, and the level of social perception has begun to get out of the monopoly of rigid, monocentric and forcible tools. According to Althusser, effects of tools and means of ideology and pressure used by the state which were constructed by the social organization of the last century have been reduced, and the new media has started building a new field of social life, demands, political discourse and political organizations based thereon.

It follows that, current events are not limited only to the change in mass communication industry. It can be observed that the two hundred-year-old social organization has been going through a change as well. Although it is to be established yet which one affects the other, new communication tools and political development of the societies make each other undergo an evolutionary change. Therefore, evaluating and determining the development pertaining to the field of mass communication require an understanding of social transformation as well. Positive or negative aspects of this process of understanding are highlighted, and widely varying views are suggested such as expressing that while individuals expand their fields of freedom, they are getting lonelier at the same time, and pointing out that unifying values relating to the society have been shattered by new media applications, or that new and more qualified values have been born thereby, etc. Besides, an expansion can be observed in the field of market economy, as well as the presence of new social organizations caused thereby. Today, development of the market system which requires continuous expansion and was described in the book “Great Transformation” by the Hungarian philosopher Karl Polanyi who was known for his opposition to the traditional economic thought breaks the cluster of feudalism-based nation-state, and furthermore, a new process using market dynamism looms on the horizon which is based on global countries that have completed their progress of industrialization and are the sources of digital infrastructure. He notes that “the market-induced system which has got out of the society’s control and followed its own rules, and for which it is impossible to accord with the human nature has deconstructed the social structure in order to maintain its own presence”; however, it has faced a threat it cannot deal with”. Thus, the era we are in is the period which sees the struggle between social structure, organizations and representations on the one side, which own the tools of retrospective mass communication system and the “perception of authority” sold thereby, and thought and value representations of manufacturers/users of digital communication tools and platforms and social media on the other. Therefore, all kinds of traditional communication tools we know today are still trying not to lose their feature of being the power centre by way of applying the digital developments to their own structures while dominant political organizations and representations prefer to put a distance between themselves and digital communication tools and social media applications, and manage the information recipients of large masses. Similarly, traditional market actors who do not prefer to change the habits of the consumer markets opt to configure the sales of communication contents which are to raise a barrier before the changes in their lifestyles, and they support the content centers held by the political masters of the social structure, and thus prevent power centers from crystallizing.

Richard Sennett states in his book “Authority” that “authority is an essential requirement”, and that authority is a main integral factor for adults. He takes authority, in its most basic form, as the effort of interpreting the conditions of power, and figuring out the conditions of control and influence by way of identifying an image of power. “... As a result of taking authority as the process of interpreting the power, a question is raised as to what extent the sense of authority depends upon the view of its controller”. Describing two separate schools on this issue, Sennett states that according to one of these schools, the factor determining what the subject will see and feel is

mainly the conditions of power. The most prominent representative of this school is Max Weber. However, unlike Weber, according to most Marxists representing the other school which postulates that the power held by dominant social classes automatically becomes images of authority, "Ideas of dominant classes are the dominant ideas of the era. People do not think about the power, but about the things instilled into them by the ones who hold the power". Weber does not find this view satisfactory and points out the importance of the rise of critical mind. Weber thinks that "people produce ideas about the power from a variety of perspectives; however, certain ideas cause them to see the ones who are in power as the authority, which are determined by various controls adopted by the ones in power". All in all, the part which is stressed out by Weber as well relating to the perception of authority is the item "various controls". Media tools (newspapers, magazines, cinema, television and radio) we call traditional media today which have marked the construction of the last century's social organization stand out as the tools working for establishing the authority of new political organizations who have grabbed the power from their predecessors. The media that will design and coordinate the "voluntary obedience", as Weber put it, is required for the authority which is to be established by way of creating "voluntary obedience". Media is the manufacturing plant for the images of authority. In order to realize its dream of capital accumulation based on high production and distribution, industrial capitalism needs masses non-resistant to the production system. Masses are expected not to complain about or react to poverty and harshness of living conditions. Furthermore, the importance of mass media increases even more for the products manufactured to be marketed, as well as for achieving mass consumption. Ideological tools pertaining to the market which aims at mass production of voluntary obeyers, and to the state which guarantees this mass production worked for and caused the construction of the capital-owning class and the end of feudalism in the last century. As Ahmet İnsel states in his book "Critique of Economic Ideology", the belief that a voluntarist and authoritarian state was required in order to realize the capitalist economy's ideal of development was an issue agreed upon by development economists in 1950s. There were even ones stressing out that instead of democracy, a "temporary" dictatorship would be better in the first stage of the development period. As Alex Callinicos put it, "closed nation-states enabled the development of capitalism", and development of both economic and political organizations could be possible with the help of mass communication industry organized and structured by the capital.

Capitalist market system of the last century has recently been going through a change, and within the framework of this new system, actors of production and consumption have to be more social. Despite the thought that capital accumulation should be achieved come hell or waters high, ideals of planned economy and development economy are replaced by "social economy" in the recently developed state structures. The system bringing about the construction of uniformity and monoculturalism is replaced by cultural change, and there are attempts to express the concepts of multiculturalism, cultural engagement and representation of differences with different concepts such as social change and social engagement. As the values of the past shattered by the tools of modernism in the process of designing a new phase are revived, we witness confusing events. Moreover, as all known values are reviewed

and the classes marginalized in the last century begin to raise their voices, living areas for certain sections of the society become narrow. In the course of all these, representative values of the last century try to survive while social organizations who had achieved dominant positions and living conditions try to protect their tools and relationships of power. While media tools of the mass communication industry which resist the change try to survive as well, they cannot leave the habits of content generation and presentation, and social engineering. New communication technologies and social media restrain their habitat as well, and indicate that they should determine a new way for the future. Rather than promising a new kind of market, social media and mass communication industry bring an effect that changes the behaviours of consumers and breaks the habits. Despite all the resistance, this necessitates the change in direct proportion to the market pressure and demand of consumption. A hundred year later, probably, it will be hard to find paper-based journalism. Content generators we know today, i.e. organizations, television, cinema, schools, universities and libraries, will change, and furthermore, changes will occur in the structure of social organization as a result of the digital changes in transfer of information. Families, cultural organizations, religions, etc. will be affected. A future change in political structure model, institutions and tools seems inevitable as well. As our habitat will be equipped with smart buildings and smart transportations systems, our habits of following the media and contents will be changed too. Current events indicate that radical changes will occur in working styles and in the structure of manufacturer-capital.

Power centers of the feudal system had changed with bourgeois revolution, and now, power centers of our century which have been built with the intervention of bourgeois are on shaky ground. One of these power centers, mass/traditional media, has been going through such a change. The unavoidable fact is that mass media will go through this change with its all values and mode of operation. The first volume of the two books, i.e. “Social Media and Network Society”, consisting of articles most of which are professional includes papers in which you will find the clues about the said change. The second book, however, deals with the analysis of the effects of social media within the context of culture, identity and politics. We are sure that number of such studies will increase, and analysis of the changing mass communication industry will be more extensive and higher in number, thus leading the practices and the future. I would like to say thank you to all fellow academicians and authors who have contributed to the studies, and to the distinguished academician, Gülüm Şener Ulagay, Arif Yıldırım, Richard Vickers who are dear friends of mine I have collaborated with in the preparation process of the books. Hoping to be together in new works...

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