Chapter 8

Erdogan vs. Erdogan: A Polarized Post–Truth Case in Social Media Reality

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines social media relations, which build virtual Erdogans as two opposite realities, with netnography method because of community composition and cultural sharing contents. It will be analyzed visual ‘Erdogan’ productions in Anti-Tayyip (Opponent) and Erdoğan Sevdalıları-Lovers of Erdogan (Fan/Supporter) communities and it will be drawn post-truth biography of a leader in visual culture of social media. Two different/opposite virtual realities of Erdogan, which are reproduced in social media sociality every day, lead to expansion of polarized political climate in the context of organic society and absorb the political identity of Erdogan.
INTRODUCTION

The close relationship between politics and media is a quite common tradition both in Turkey and in the world conjuncture. However, an expansion towards social media and the distribution of agenda-building initiative to political poles represent the next level in this relationship. Even though the hereditary codes are absorbed to a certain degree by the fact that agenda-setting user interests are distributed to multiple social forms in the public sphere of social media, it is clear that politics expand to digital media. Some scientific authorities refer to social media as a kind of public arena since it encourages participation. But it turns into a cyberspace with political topics or individual demonstrations penetrating further by the day, thus it can be argued that this platform is under a clear invasion (Fuchs, 2014). A correlation can be found between the increase in political content of digital action on many platforms, especially on Twitter and the creation of interest related to politicization, as well as motivation on social media and traditional habits. In this context, the agenda that shapes the reality of everyday life has a facade that creates intense attention on the social media. McComb and Shaw (1972) argue that the traditional mass media can form a picture in the minds of the audience and determine “not how they will view something, but what they will view.” On the other hand, this view focusing on social media’s ‘prosumer’ culture (Fuchs, 2017, p. 72) seeks the possibility of political truth in “what the audience talks about, as well as how they talk about it.” After all, users are the actual actors of a system of truths produced by the political group they adhere to, therefore, they have the merit for determining the agenda together with centralized sources of information. Moreover, the discourse is not based solely on the verbal structure of language, but it creates an arithmetic of visual symbols, as well. The sequence of post-truth, which dominates feelings and opinions increasingly more and becomes more public every day is contained within a network of interactions and identifications with no clear-cut boundaries.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) declared ‘post-truth’ as the word of the year in 2016 (en.oxforddictionaries.com) based on the Brexit Referendum in the UK and Donald Trump’s political campaign for Presidency. In the related article about this ‘awarded’ concept, the situationality was defined with reference to the difference between ‘being’ and ‘appearing.’ This concept finds its power in a truth which is only there through the qualities and the feel of this phenomenon. Furthermore, there is no need for the plain truth. Inspired by politics, post-truth penetrates into each and every cell of society with its expansionist oscillation to have supremacy over all convictions. By 2019, post-truth is not only a practice in the political arena, but has its place in the ranks of advertisement and corporate universes. It thus dominates social convictions and resists to touch base with the truth. It turns into a cliché in the face of objective data and the extremes of emotional discourses and convictions (Zarzalejos, 2017, p. 13). The political attitude accompanying politicized feelings and convictions cannot be distinguished from the sensitivities and opinions within the community in general. The post-truth politicization is like a heavy odor descending on social life, it is like a fisherman betrayed by his smell on a first date.

Yanık (2017) emphasizes mass sentiments with the reference that “in forming public opinion on certain issues, objective truth is far less important than personal beliefs” in describing post-truth. After all, the truth does not mean anything on its own and the reality as we know it up until this era is more often than not the modern reality. This rational perspective does not touch the specially structured practices, discourses, politics, and institutionalization. Post-truth, on the contrary, includes all of them and
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