Chapter 6
March 31, 2019 Local Elections and the Media

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ABSTRACT

Voters in a democracy contribute to the governance process and mediate the legitimacy of equality and pluralism. This is of great importance in terms of understanding and legitimizing the true meaning of democracy. In the last decade, Turkey has experienced many elections. Local elections on March 31, 2019 were very important. They were quite different in terms of the presentation of political parties and their candidates in the media because both politicians and the public ascribed a lot of meaning to these elections. Therefore, the media showed great interest in the March 31, 2019 local elections, frequently featuring public opinion polls, election campaigns, and political statements that informed voters in real time. This chapter examines the media content of the March 31, 2019 elections.
INTRODUCTION

Social practices are shaped by the teachings of the modern world and universal values and criteria try to adapt to the changes that the world is going through. In addition to the changes experienced by the society in many areas, changes in fundamental values and rituals are also observed. The individual who needs to see various differences in the postmodern era has to adapt to the differences in today’s age, which is digitalized every day. In our modern world today, we sometimes criticize the social order and sometimes exalt it based on its well-accepted practices. However, it is always imagined to reach a better world and a fairer society. Collective living spaces and practices are directly related to how individuals, who comprise the society, are located and represented. Democracy is essential for countries and societies. Democracy is essentially a return to collective life and an indispensable argument of existence. Democracy, which includes individuals into political decision-making processes and is against the dictatorships, in fact, aims the development of civil society. Because of this, discussions on democracy are based on the idea of civil society, and the concepts of democracy and civil society are interpreted in a way that they are intertwined. Civil society is seen as a sociological counterpart and even as a subset of democracy in the political sphere. In democracies, elections, during which voters participate in the process by voting, are popular discussion topics in many parts of the world. Discussions, allegations, campaigns, and political conflicts about local or general elections are the routine of these periods. It is because the elections are important for both voters and parties/political actors (Becker, 2016; Calvert and Burnell, 2004).

There are some controversial situations in the functioning of democracy, which accepts elections as an important element. For example, discontent is caused by corporate deficiency, which prevents accountability and good governance (Diamond, 2001). According to Diamond (2001), systems of the party and campaign finance are deeply defective in many democracies (old and new). Citizens are considered as powerless to change the system, however, the media is not the same, since it can reveal it. In fact, media has a mediating role in the development of democracy. Therefore, the role and the attitude of the media, which is observed to be undergoing a structural transformation based on new media today, is very important in democratic processes. So, in this study, the contribution of the media in terms of providing information about politics before the local elections held in Turkey on March 31, 2019 will be examined. In this context, news and public opinion polls about the mentioned elections will be discussed in the light of the hermeneutics approach. The media outlets were selected through verdictive sampling. The reason for this preference was the ideological stances of the media organizations (Sabah, Sözcü, Yeni Çağ Newspapers). Sabah is a newspaper close to the government, while the
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