
Digital Realism: a Dialectic Approach to Understanding Digital Media's Social Functions in View of Ethnic-Identity Related Online Activism

KOME – An International Journal of Pure
Communication Inquiry
Volume 5 Issue 2, p. 1-18.
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Published by the Hungarian Communication
Studies Association
DOI: 10.17646/KOME.2017.21

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Abstract: Apart from the evident attributes and tendencies of digital media that justify the social and politico-economic criticism of understanding their structure and relevant mechanisms, under certain circumstances they indeed show traits of effective online mobilisation for (sub)political participation. Two case studies are given to demonstrate the mobilisation potential within digital media in the context of ethnic identity-related (sub)political engagement, and to juxtapose such qualities with other patterns conditioned by large-scale politico-economic and international power-related structures and agendas. Such findings that confirm the understanding of digital media as platforms and applications for organic and uncompromised online participation and networking can support reclaiming digital media's optimistic aspirations to be a public sphere. Herein a *via media* is proposed between digital optimism and digital pessimism in support of earlier nuanced approaches to the social functions of digital media, which indeed correctly recognised the limits of online environment as a hypothetical public sphere, thus can be referred to as digital realist.

Keywords: digital media; public sphere; internet; public sphere; social participation