



Bingöl Üniversitesi
İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi
Bingol University
Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences

Cilt/Volume: 6, Sayı/Issue: 2
Yıl/Year: 2022, s. 485-506
DOI: 10.33399/biibfad.1189295
ISSN: 2651-3234/E-ISSN: 2651-3307

Bingöl/Türkiye

Derleme Bilgisi /Review Info

Geliş/Received: 14.10.2022 Kabul/ Accepted: 23.11.2022



NEOLIBERALISM, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

Neoliberalizm, Siyasal Katılım ve Demokrasi

Ersin ERKAN*
Hüdayi SAYIN**
Fevzi KAÇER***

Abstract

Democracy is defined as the system in which the people are determined as the source of sovereignty and the executives elected by the people, as representatives, perform the bargaining processes in the political arena regarding social demands. With the form shaped by the relation of capitalist production, 19th century gained a characteristic unique to the industrial society. In the industrial society, the people of the feudal society were obliged to work with a fixed, regular income. while job security and stability turned serf into proletariat, desubjectified them in the perception of participation in decisions and the sharing of resources. The participation of the productive classes in the decision-making by voting in the elections, facilitated the plunder of the commons by the capital. In the neoliberal phase of capitalism reached digitalization, the working classes lost their gains in the context of citizenship, as the relations of production turned into an unstable and precarious form. This loss, corresponding to publicity, created the source of the neofascist movement, fueled by

* Prof.Dr. Bingol University, erkaners@gmail.com, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9854-0368>

** Assoc. Prof., Istanbul Yeni Yuzyil University, hudayi.sayin@yeniyuzyil.edu.tr, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8994-4088>

*** Assist. Prof., Bingol University, fkacer@bingol.edu.tr, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6272-5125>

identity politics. This text has discussed the change in the nature of democratic representation in the context of the transformation of the relations of capitalist production from industrial society to digital society, participation, the political projection of the commons of a politically agreed community, and the loss of publicity. The discussion was held through literature review and critical analysis of the conceptual framework.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, democracy, public sphere, political participation, authoritarianism

JEL Codes: D72.

Öz

Demokrasi, egemenliğin kaynağının halk olarak belirlendiği ve halkın seçtiği yöneticilerin temsilci olarak siyaset arenasında toplumsal taleplerle ilgili pazarlık süreçlerini yürüttüğü sistem şeklinde tanımlanır. 19. yüzyıl kapitalist üretim ilişkilerinin biçimlendirdiği formu ile sanayi toplumuna özgü bir nitelik kazanmıştır. Sanayi toplumunda, feodal toplumun insanı sabit, düzenli bir gelir ile işe bağlandı. İş güvencesi ve istikrar serfi, proletaryaya dönüştürürken, ona kararlara katılım algısı ile kaynakların paylaşımında edilgenliğe sürükledi. Üretici sınıfların belirli aralıklarla yapılan seçimlerde oy verme şeklinde kararlara katılımı, *müştereklerin* sermaye tarafından yağmalanmasının da önünü açtı. Kapitalizmin, dijitalleşme ile geldiği neoliberal evrede, üretim ilişkilerinin istikrarsız, güvencesiz bir forma dönüşmesiyle, emekçi sınıflar yurttaşlık çerçevesinde kazanımlarını kaybettiler. Kamusalığa karşılık gelen bu yitim, kimlik politikaları ile köpürtülen neofaşist hareketin de kaynağını oluşturmuştur. Bu metin, sanayi toplumundan dijital topluma kapitalist üretim ilişkilerinin dönüşümünü, katılım, siyasalda oydaşmış bir topluluğun *müştereklerin* siyasal izdüşümü ile kamusalığın kaybı çerçevesinde demokratik temsilin niteliğinde ortaya çıkan dönüşümleri tartışmıştır. Tartışma, literatür taraması ve kavramsal çerçevenin eleştirel analizi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Neoliberalizm, demokrasi, kamusal alan, siyasal katılım, otoriterlik

JEL Kodları: D72.

1. Introduction

It is observed that in the neo-liberal phase of capitalism which puts everything under the yoke of consumption and speculation, politics

again fell into a slave status and became an instrument of capital (Han, 2018: 59). It seems unrealistic and meaningless to talk about popular sovereignty in this process. The reality is that some expect this to be accepted as a “so-called democracy” as the lesser evil (Dahl, 1972: 1998); some claim that it (democracy) can no longer rule by being paralyzed (Sartori, 1987); while others believe that popular sovereignty is a lie (Gentile, 2019); even that the 'people' is just an image created by the state for itself and has turned into an ideology in the service of the powerful elites (Touraine, 1997). There are approaches that argue that in today's democracies, there should be The talk of elite dominance and that there should be more and more concern about representative politics (Gibson et al. 2008: 112). In the last fifty years, according to Han (2019: 17), capital has transcended, has risen to a new master position, and freedom was sacrificed in the process. In other words, despite the emphasis on democracy, the sanctification of the people's rule more than ever, and the fact that democracy is a generally accepted form of government in legal-constitutional texts, it is not possible to talk about truly political participation, popular power, or a regime where the society can determine its destiny and protect its interests.

However, it should be emphasized that in terms of the contradictions of democracy, the problem is not periodical or temporary. This problem, which is historical and structural due to its immanence to capitalism, has also been emphasized by fascist theorists and has been exploited to ground authoritarian and totalitarian governments. For example, Carl Schmitt pointed out the “crisis of democracy” in the years when empires dissolved and the foundations of legitimacy for power within parliaments were consolidated right after the First World War and made the following determination in the preface of his book: “Criticism against modern parliamentarism has existed for a long time. (...) The fact that all parliamentary systems have become a bad showcase that hides the dominance of parties and economic interests (...) shattered many parliamentary and democratic illusions. Non-socialists, also realized the connection between the press, the party, and capital and began to see politics in the shadow of economic realities” (2014, 10-13). A century later, the state of democracy is still not satisfactory.

Under all circumstances, deregulation, in which the interests of capital are prioritized, has been adopted as the basic principle. The public is highly passive (Sennett 2010), the public sphere is fragmented and privatized (Bauman, 2000), and the public budget and the minimum commons are plundered. Although all these are not new, they have gained new dimensions in the neoliberal order. Politics has been stripped of its social nature and placed at the disposal of bare exploitation. This process that Milanovic (2018) calls the dominance of global plutocrats or “global plutocracy” actually corresponds to as long as Faulkner (2016: 383) states that resources go to the greed and violence of a very small minority who do not engage in any productive activity. In neoliberal times, when unbridled market forces increase inequality (Stiglitz, 2018: 90), it is seen that politics is stuck in two options: 'plutocracy' and 'populism' (Milanovic, 2018: 207). Then, what is experienced today is, as Emile Gentile (2019: 109) calls the “oxymoron of democracy,” that is, ‘stage democracy’ ruled by the representatives of a “democracy without demos”. The sovereign people, who are always less able to exercise their sovereignty, have been cut off from their rulers, which they still elect, and thus rendered non-sovereign.

In an environment where the self is immersed in itself, everything that belongs to the sociability melts away, and even the public person collapses as an understanding (Sennett, 2010), the issue comes to a head at one point: Will the real global public sphere be formed or will the 'network society' become a global society in an age where the 'public' is taken over and emptied by the 'market' and 'private' (Bauman, 2010). In this context, in the first part of the study, the issue of how the public collapsed, in other words, the neoliberal process in which the public was plundered and social control was regressed, will be discussed together with the rise of neo-fascist politics, which narrows the possibility of social intervention in favor of society. All indications point out that today, the sense of belonging/loyalty to democracy, politics and its basic institutions and social trust towards them are eroded more than ever before in history. Indeed, especially the crisis of representative politics and the socio-political problems that it has created stands out as a crucial agenda (Putnam, 2000; Gibson et

al., 2008: 112). From this point of view, in the second part of the study, the possibility of political participation with a pro-society and liberating politics in which democracy is truly popular sovereignty will be discussed.

2. The Erosion of The Public and The Rise of Authoritarianism

The public sphere, as the field of reflection and determination of power relations, is both the ground and the place where democracy takes shape. Although it seems like a contradiction, it can be argued that the public sphere emerged with the emergence of the private sphere. In fact, with the transition to settled life due to the agricultural revolution, the ruling classes that broke away from production have 'privatized' the social surplus (Eroğlu, 2014). The ruling classes, who seized the social surplus, exhibited the privileges they obtained and maintained in the palaces (political elite), temples (spiritual elite), castles (military elite) and so on 'private' areas. In other words, these spaces were also the property of the ruling elite.

The unequal power relationship, in which the ruling classes, despite being out of production, can appropriate most of the agricultural production, cannot be explained simply by their possession of the basic means of production (land, slave, ox, plow, etc.) and the means of violence. As Althusser emphasizes with reference to Marx, the ruling classes that make up the social formation reproduce the conditions of production, and if they cannot provide this, "even a child knows that they will not be able to sustain their lives for even a year" (2002, 17-18).

In short, the ruling classes also had ideas (and values, ethics etc.) that could be called 'ideology', and the communication-governing tools of that period could be called 'ideological devices'. Thus, the places outside the rulers' private areas were evaluated as the public sphere. In other words, the public sphere emerged due to settled, classed and more complex social system based on the division of labor. However, by being public, the space in question was not under the control of society. The public sphere, which is the economic efficiency ground of producing a rational common good, caused the consent to be shaped in favor of the power holders in unequal social structures. This "unhistorical" and "eternal" ideology (Althusser, 2002, 47-51) has

been globalized and spread in a genetic form that transfers the control function to generations in industrial society as well. In fact, the public sphere, controlled by the minority, was a space of ideological manipulation and control that concealed, normalized and perpetuated economic exploitation.

Without taking the historical background further, it should be noted that (representative) democracy emerged with bourgeois-liberal capitalism and evolved with the transformations of capitalism. As a matter of fact, within the framework of "the belief that it has to be democratized as if it were destiny", the concept of "people's sovereignty" turned into the "dominant trend" of the struggle against the monarchy in industrial countries and ended with the victory of "democracy" (Schmitt, 2014: 37-38). After certain periods of democratization, in which the contradictions between the capitalist classes intensified and the social-labor politics gained momentum, the neoliberal domination phase began. While the processes of accumulation and distribution continued to work in favor of the capital, which could never be satisfied, the masses were put to sleep and pushed out of politics with the consent methods that would replace the soma pill that gives happiness in Huxley's "Beautiful New World"¹ in so-called democracies.

In short, the public sphere has been the key concept and space of every socio-political system after the emergence of class societies. As it is known, in the context of the historicity of every phenomenon and concept, democracy and the public sphere are not static, they are dynamic. Who participates and at what level in the public sphere, the topics discussed (political agenda) and the ideas circulated provide direct information about the social hierarchy and the nature of democracy at that time. When the analysis section is shifted rapidly to the present, it is seen that the public sphere in the age of neoliberal capitalism has been taken out of social control more than ever before in history.

¹ The word "brave" in Shakespearean English means "beautiful". The work has been presented to the audience in the languages of the world as Brave New World.

Today, the public sphere is under pressure from the market and the 'private'. As a result, political participation and democracy are gradually weakening. For instance, Korkut Boratav (2022) claims that today's regimes (or leaders) that are called authoritarian-populist are essentially neo-fascists, and they absolutely reject the distribution policies in favor of labor. Again, Boratav argues, one of the critical points in neo-liberalism, which is the "design of placing the unlimited domination of capital around the world", was to prevent the reactions of the traditional working classes from turning in an anti-capitalist direction. At this point, especially in America and England (and later in other countries), new right-wing governments have tried to realize a new state and society design in favor of capital by removing the struggle of the working class from being an organized class struggle with neoliberal policies. The rise of authoritarian politics provided the necessary environment for the realization of this design. In other words, these regimes that have surrendered to capital have paralyzed labor's opposition with false discourses, deepened the exploitation in favor of capital and created the illusion of democracy. This situation manifests itself in the changing contexts, sometimes in the form of increased racism, nationalism and religious radicalism, sometimes in the form of anti-immigrant opposition, xenophobia, sometimes anti-terrorism, and sometimes fighting internal and external enemies.

The process of penetration of capital in the neoliberal era in developed and undeveloped countries has led not only to economic but also to social, political, class, cultural and ecological destruction. In this destruction process, where economic, political, cultural, moral and ecological crises coincide, intertwining and depressing the world with all its dimensions, humanity and even nature/the world are face to a total collapse. According to Başkaya (2022), what is actually described as "collapse" is a great plunder: it is the plunder of nature, the budget, the treasury and the commons. In this picture of decadence, the counter colors of neo-fascist politics become clear as ethnic, religious, etc. primordial, that is, innately acquired characteristics are filled as valid and legitimate commodities in the public sphere. Moreover, not content with this, the fifty-year balance sheet of this neo-liberal process, in which the private became public

and the public was privatized, coincides with the historical promise of fascism. There is widespread, deep and total destruction in all fields from ethics to aesthetics, from ecology to art, from education to literature, from economy to politics, and from social organization to health. On the one hand, capital becomes autonomous; on the other hand, the individual is either atomized or imprisoned in his/her ethnic, religious, etc., primordial identities. A huge neo-liberal spectre lurks in the middle, alienating nature and society. A stabilized state of 'instability'... In a way, the masses that have turned into the 'nobody' socialized with the dead in the cemetery by Gaiman (2008) cannot escape the whirlpool of alienation that follows them.

While communities formed around increasingly fragmented and differentiated identities are atomized and separated, they are purged of the power of solidarity. Besides, while the confinement of the political to identities activates the perceptions of 'friends and enemies' determined by the sovereign, it prevents solidarity from gaining a class character. The masses, condemned to the atomization of nationalism, which has assumed the function of the religiousness of the modern era, become evident in the darkening colors, solidify and become immobile, while the capital, fattening with an insatiable appetite, gains the ability to move beyond fluidity with a colorless and odorless gas, and infiltrates the capillaries of the society and controls the heartbeats and brain movements. The masses are isolated in the suburbs of the capitalist city, which has turned into a big prison, and they are condemned to move away from the consensus that will protect their existence against the capital. On the other hand, the identityless structure of capital, which has purified itself from the patterns of belonging, is integrating and is progressing, especially under the leadership of finance-capital and transnational companies. In this process, while the capital regulates the internal political mechanisms, the political institution convinces the opium-ridden masses of the locality/nationality and the legitimacy of their decisions. It is almost as if the queen bee -the elite minority ringing around the capital- controls the decision mechanisms that produce the production conditions and determines their practices, while the worker bees bring

back their earnings with their transcendent efforts and leave them in the hive.

This is exactly why, as Rancière (2007) puts it, how the “uncounted” and “unreadable” segments of the people can rise to the level of “counted” is the fundamental issue of politics and society. Today's world needs to be saved quickly with humanitarian/social intervention. As Bauman (2010) concretely depicts in his critical analysis of 'globalization', financial capital can circulate smoothly without restrictions while the earth becomes a troubled prison for individuals and societies deprived of social resources. We are in such a moment that in a historical cross-section where the self is buried, everything that belongs to the social melts, and even the public person collapses as an understanding (Sennett, 2010, 17). We are in a time when everything solid evaporates, or rather everything is fluid (Bauman, 2006), and we live in a world where there is no ground left to anchor, destined to walk on a thin layer of ice that is prone to breaking at any moment, and woven with uncertainties (Giddens, 2014). Plus, we are compelled to live in a risky society (Beck, 1992) in the context of deep insecurity with the planet facing extinction. Shortly, in the coordinates where capitalism has become 'flexible/disorganized' (Lash and Urry, 2007) and deepened and spread more than ever before in history, politics in general has moved away from its social and operational content, and primordial identities have become basic political lines or dynamics. In other words, at this point, the economic and social context of politics has been replaced by individual and identity-centered demands and discourses.

To sum up, as noted above, the fragmentation and privatization of public space are concurrent with the plundering of the commons. This reality can only be possible with the privatization of the public, the transformation of politics and the purification of democracy from its social (participatory) content. In addition, at this point, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that identity politics creates the illusion of equality, hides inequalities and anomalies, and prevents the crisis from being perceived in the right form and content by social segments in the coordinates where inequality deepens and neo-liberal policies have difficulty in producing legitimacy. According to many

philosophers, neo-liberal politics, which is tried to be legitimized and opened up with discourses and analyzes such as 'globalization', 'post-modernization', 'post-industrialization', 'identity politics', prevents social organizations against exploitation, environmental disasters and consumerism and limits the possibilities of democratic intervention. For example, identity politics, aside from freedom and self-determination, can paradoxically turn identities into prisons in some cases, activating social fault lines, and establishing 'post-political' or 'pre-political' distinctions among people such as ethnicity, religion, language, race, sect, etc. (or by deepening existing distinctions) it functions as an obstacle to unifying political consciousness and organizations. Thus, the public sphere is fragmented. As in the example of the broken mirror, the fragmented or dispersed public space is more of a multitude of images rather than giving a genuine image, and it fragments reality rather than reflecting it. However, inclusive and active politics is only possible with awareness of the integrity of reality.

Things have lost their long-lasting character in the world of production (and, of course, finance) that has become de-territorialized thanks to new technology. Today, jobs are done by temporary and precarious workers in short-term jobs that have lost their proletarian identity and qualification (Chen, 2020, 121). In fact, this mass is the mass that has lost the spirit of solidarity, which Guy Standing (2011) calls 'precariat', and is condemned to insecurity. The mass, which has lost its social and class identity, is forced to pure and absolute obedience, consent with all its disorganization, insecurity and helplessness (and political weakness). As a result of its political institutionalization, capital brought the decision mechanism to the expertise of a group of minority professionals who are far from society. On the other hand, (capital) is leading the great mass, which is atomized or dressed in primordial identities, to a destructive political struggle with each other. Thus, both infecting politics with market pathology and squeezing into primordial identities are simultaneous and common natures of neo-despotic and neo-fascist governments. However, politics is neither capital's apprentice nor simply the 'art of managing differences'. The public sphere, on the other hand, is not a

marketplace where self-interested individuals interact to maximize pleasure.

3. Re-Publicanism, Popular Sovereignty and Democracy

There is a system crisis in every area of political life. On the other hand, neo-fascist politics against labor, human and nature tries to legitimize itself by constantly referencing itself. "Choicelessness" is being imposed by so-called intellectual and academic figures/rhetoric who advocate the continuous growth of capital. To put it more concretely, the approaches suggesting that liberation from the depression and total destruction that continue with authoritarian/neofascist governments, in which the people are prevented from being sovereign, will be possible with the "democratization of representative/liberal democracy" (Tekeli, 2004: 1) seem to oversimplify the problem. Indeed, society and politics urgently need to be freed from the bracket of authoritarian and neoliberal rule. On the other hand, according to Han, the lack of alternatives operating under the yoke of today's politics makes truly political action impossible: Policy does not *act*, but it *works*. The policy must offer an alternative, a real choice. Otherwise, it will turn into a dictatorship and collapse. As the stooge of the system, the politician is not a free person in the Aristotelian sense, but rather a slave (Han, 2018: 63). It is very clear that electing the rulers and giving certain people the right to make decisions on behalf of the ruled do not protect the social interest. At this point, it is useful to listen to Emile Gentile again in order to clarify the issue. Gentile answers the question "whether the sovereign people exists as a genuine people" (2019: 100): "There are rulers and politicians who speak for the sovereign people, but there is no sovereign people." Therefore, in terms of the interest of the society, it is essential that participation be made direct and effective, that democracy becomes real and that a democratic politics that works for the benefit of society becomes functional. In other words, it is necessary to overcome the classical concept of governing and to develop a participatory democratic understanding that will allow the society to govern itself.

As explained above, the process in which the political is rapidly detached from the social and becomes relatively independent has worrisome results. Humanity and the planet need the search and understanding of new and radical politics that will eliminate corruption. As emphasized earlier, institutions, concepts and ideologies related to modern representative democracy are insufficient to define, convey and politicize today's needs. Moreover, this inadequacy reflects the crisis of the existing system. As Bauman emphasizes (2010, 28), in an age where the subjugation and annexation of the 'public' by the 'private' is rapidly collapsing the public man, "the public sphere must once again be able to be made the place of long-term commitments rather than random and fleeting encounters". In other words, there is a need for a global public space, and the question "Will this be possible, will the network society become a global society?" remains relevant. However, the issue is to save politics from the domination of the market and capital beyond developing a "politics that can catch up with the speed of global markets" (Habermas, 2001: 109).

When we look again and more closely at the picture that was tried to be drawn above, it will be seen that what is valid for many historical political-social concepts and phenomena is very valid for democracy today: democracy is suffering from a deep crisis. The crisis in question has two sides (integrating with each other). Firstly, the understanding and practice of democracy, which was shaped and gained content on the socio-political reality of the 19th century, does not coincide with today's capitalist economic-social-political and even ecological reality. Secondly, if the essence of democracy is the 'rule of the people' and this is possible with the political participation of the people, today's political-social participation is at the lowest level in history, and even it is observed that indifference to politics-democracy, amounting to hatred (Putnam, 2000). In fact, the problem discussed here is more complex. The liberal creed such as participation in elections, determination of power through elections and pluralism (civil society) is not sufficient on its own. As Touraine (1997) put it clearly, democracy has simultaneously entered the service of the most powerful ones (plutocracy) and authoritarian governments that can do

whatever they want (populism and neo-fascism). In the game of "democracy turning into polyarchy", as Dahl (1972) puts it, the masses are made to believe that they participate in political decisions by simply voting and electing the ruling elite. The masses in question direct their anger towards vulnerable social segments such as minorities and immigrants with the hostile discourse of neo-fascism in the face of the inequality of resource distribution. With the tales of the golden past presented to them, their minds are smashed and they become too blind to see the responsibility of the ruler/exploiter.

It is useful to repeat Gentile's (2019: 59) argument on fictional popular sovereignty here: "Since elections in Western democracies continue to be an instrument of the election of the political class and the rulers (even though the majority on which the government is based is often a minority of the electorate), and since other conditions of representative democracy are at least procedurally preserved -from freedom of opinion to freedom of expression, assembly and demonstration-, I think it would be more accurate to talk about the stage democracy of the de-sovereigned people rather than democracy without people." If politics is a break from the model of the shepherd who feeds the flock (Ranci re, 2017, 42), the human community "aware, informed and with common/public interests and demands" is a vital need for genuine democracy where the sovereignty is truly in the people. Subsequently, if there is a direct relationship between the breadth (democratization level) of the public sphere and democracy, the effectiveness and functionality of the public sphere (and democracy) are possible with transparent, qualified and democratic information and communication². As a result, if democracy can be defined as the prevalence and depth of political participation, new approaches and evaluations are needed in the crisis period in which the field of politics is narrowed, and democracy is under threat.

² New media has the potential to offer such a possibility like never before (Bentivegna, 2006; Norris 2001). On the other hand, if information and communication tools are under the control of a certain minority and the information circulating is manipulative and controlled, it is debatable how free the public sphere is and how much true and qualified information people communicate and interact with.

It is generally accepted that participation and pluralism are indispensable values of democracy. In this sense, civic activism is essential for a 'strong democracy' in overcoming the crisis of politics and political actors (Norris, 2003: 21). Regardless of which school they come from, all democracy theorists see the active participation of society as the life spring of democracy. In a liberal context, voting participation, along with other institutional mechanisms, is one of the main features of representative democracy. Of course, modern democracy has long exceeded an election - indexed participation dimension. What is needed today is a transition from a ballot box democracy (vote-centric democracy) to a voice-centric democracy with continuous and direct participation by the people (Kymlicka and Patten, 2003). At this point, with practices that will enable the participation of the people in the decision-making processes, the people should pass on to "full-time" citizenship, which always takes care of their own problems, beyond the influence of their own problems through their representatives by voting from election to election. It also represents a total mental transformation. Indeed, as well as the existence of democratic institutions that will enable participatory democracy, there is a need for understanding and mechanisms that will pave the way for the participation of organized structures that are aware of their own problems and take the initiative in solving these problems, in decision-making processes.

On the other hand, if politics is to decide "who will win by how much, when and how", how much effective who is in the system ultimately determines who will win and how much (Laswell, 1936). Considering that politics is an art of "influencing", the basic question is who are the "influencers". In a democracy where the people can truly dominate, sections of the public have a say, authority and decision in all decisions that concern them. Influencing and being affected in the interest of society can only be possible in this way. Despite all this, the mechanism that works in favor of the minority has privatized political activities and made the process increasingly complex and technical. Thus, the symbiotic relationship between politics and capital has become more intense and reckless; the political class embarked on image-oriented political projects with (populist) so-called charismatic

leaders and candidates attached to it, on the one hand, to put more emphasis on its professionalism. The society of spectacle (Debord, 2016) created in a hyper-reality world (Baudrillard, 2014) kneaded with image and perception long lost its connection with the truth, and a large audience has been formed that is much more inclined to believe in the narratives of the post-truth era.

The democracy based on popular sovereignty, which we have discussed so far, is not the illusion of a theatrical democracy that seeks to achieve mobilized mass popular participation, which is so common in authoritarian and populist regimes. In recent years, the so-called majority, which has been obtained by anti-democratic methods and elections that are not free in reality, is presented/thought to be the 'genuine' people. Some politicians are given 'charisma' with the endless and repeated lies and myths with the means of communication under control, and the title of 'leader of the people' is bestowed with the image of a "charismatic and messianic leader" (Finchelstein, 2021: 20). On the assumption that there is direct, intuitive or divine communication between the leader and the people, the leader and the people are equated. The leader is seen as the embodiment of the people and speaking on behalf of the people. Subsequently, the illusion of partnership between the leader and the people (as well as the partnership or equality of the state, the leader and the people) moves to the stage of the "leader's people". However, if democracy is the power of the sovereign people and the sovereign people are no longer in power, then democracy no longer exists or has become something else than it ever was (Gentile, 13). Sovereign people today have really transformed into something else. As tried to be explained above, the people or society is reduced to the thing-in-itself, which needs the guidance and intercession of the leader, rather than being for it-self. Large sections of society are ecstatic with the intoxication of power, which is enticed by seduction, lies and manipulation, and sometimes worshiping the leader (and the state, race, religion, flag, slogan, etc.) identified with the leader in the squares and rallies; sometimes they vomit their hatred for the imaginary enemies that the leader targets. These Orwellian sessions of worship and hatred are described as 'true democracy' and the 'real power' of the 'real people'. However, all these

prevent democracy based on popular sovereignty from being brought to the agenda as an accessible political option and they are nothing more than ochlocratic practices that pose a threat to democracy (Hasanović, 2015). Emile Gentile (2019: 11) bluntly puts the case and claims that “the shadow of democracy lie is spread by the staging of a stage democracy”. In reality, it is clear that all these are common features of authoritarian, populist and neo-fascist governments.

The process that collapses the public commons and renders the society passive can only be reversed by approaching the issue and the problem differently. For instance, it is possible to use contemporary information and communication technologies in a way that facilitates the participation of social initiatives and networks in decision-making processes. Effective and the aforementioned “full citizenship” can be taught at all levels of education. Government can be taken from the ruling and exploiting classes and removed from being the privilege of an elite and can be transferred to its original owner. Truly sovereignty and re-publicanism can be realized by local and direct initiative. Today, the transition from a stage democracy serving a minority (Gentile, 57) to a democracy based on popular sovereignty can be achieved through trade unions, popular initiatives and other social organizations.

If politics is to drill hardwoods passionately and slowly, with the ability to judge from afar (Weber, 2017: 90), no progress can be made in favor of the society either with those who do "politics as a profession" or with the parasites who "live on the backs of politics" (Weber, 38). Instead, the active participation of everyone should be ensured through 'unprofessionalized politics' (Başkaya, 2018), and a mechanism should be developed that makes the participation opportunities of the people possible and permanent. The society can always speak for itself as a voice, authority and decision holder; in another sense, politics and a public sphere should be created in which the word of another and the right to exist are not usurped. In other words, the dishonor of speaking on behalf of someone else (Faruk, 2021) should be put to an end. Thus, it will be possible for the "uncounted", "not readable" segments of the people (Rancière, 2007) to rise to the "counted" level.

4. Conclusion

Humanity and even the planet have come to the edge of the abyss due to capitalism being freed from its borders and reins. In fact, the expression in question implicitly states that there is a direct relationship between the process of de-sovereignty of society over economic-political life and social-ecological destruction. The picture is clear: while capital seeks only "profit" and "growth" without any ethical or moral boundaries, political elites try to protect the interests of capital and take advantage of it. Especially for the sake of maintaining neo-liberal policies, authoritarian, populist and neo-fascist governments are trying to regress social forces and to eliminate the possibility of social control and intervention. The privatization of the public sphere (and common goods) by a small minority, in other words, the disappearance of the process of appropriation, is only possible if the society recaptures what belongs to it, protects it, and can use it for the benefit of the general and the planet.

There is a need for new forms of thinking and politics that will strengthen the society in a democracy that works in favor of the society and can make democracy truly popular. That is, it is essential to equip society with public consciousness and, thus, the society can participate directly and effectively in political life. Basically, the expansion of the political/political sphere, the increase of participatory actors, the openness of the political to direct communication with the social, democratize the public sphere, and the people can truly establish sovereignty. A truly democratic public sphere (re-publicanism) can reveal a new/democratic understanding and practice of politics in which the society can affect/control the political.

Ethics Statement: The authors declare that ethical rules are followed in all preparation processes of this study. In case of detection of a contrary situation, BİİBFAD Journal does not have any responsibility and all responsibility belongs to the authors of the study.

Author Contributions: Author (1) contributed to the determination of the subject and literature. Author (2) contributed to the literature. Author (3) contributed to the literature. 1st author's contribution rate is approximately 40%, 2nd author's contribution rate is 35%, 3rd author's contribution rate is 25%.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank the Editorial Board of BİİBFAD Journal for their intense interest and efforts and the referees for their contribution

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