



## LOOPHOLE: EXPECTATIONS OF FORMING DIGITAL PUBLIC OPINION AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract:

Society is a living organism and its dynamics highly dependent upon other variables such as culture, economy, technology, etc. New developments in any of them, also change our everyday lives, expectations, attitudes, and behaviors. Nowadays, the changes in society tend to be somewhat very quick as the new digital circumstances require abrupt decisions, instantaneous likes, or dislikes emitted to shape the so-called 'digital public opinion'. It's much easier to create a new public agenda, to learn about a subject, to gather, interpret, present, or hide opinions in this new digital platform. As citizens of digital culture, all participants are expected to be aware of the new dimensions of digital citizenship with shared responsibility. Societies seem to be improving digital aspects to form a public opinion, specifically within the last two decades. This paper aims to explore the new concept of digital citizenship and recent applications of digital public opinion whereas it exemplifies how the data is drawn from traditional public sources and how they are linked to the digital world to shape digital public opinion quickly. The reactions and counter-reactions to digital public opinion are much more visible, measurable, and valuable since it causes rapid and radical changes in society. The paper concentrates on the refugee issues in general and specifically the fire in Moria affecting more than 20000

<sup>i</sup> This work was supported by Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit of Istanbul University. Project number BYP 2471 - 51965 project titled as "The Impact of Media on Children's Discourse, Value Systems & Decision Making Processes" Project coordinator - Prof. Dr. Nilüfer Pembecioğlu.

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people, including around 7000 children. How these kids were mobilized and how the decision made through digital citizenship is questioned. The paper also has some sentiment analysis correlates the results with actual events such as 5000 thousand people marching in Germany.

**Keywords:** digital citizenship, digital culture, digital public opinion, social networking, decision making process, Moria Refugee Camp, sentiment analysis, Twitter

## 1. Introduction

The pervasive presence of digital technology in our lives is part of a broader set of phenomena. The last three decades have seen the rise of globalization and the global domination of free-market capitalism, the increasing ubiquity of information and communication technologies, the burgeoning power and influence of techno-science. Today, we speak of the flow of information, transportation, civic rights and freedom as well as getting the services and necessary tools as fast as possible and all these only possible with the digital world surrounding us. We, as citizens, seem to be locked in a different planet coating us with different identities and covering our lives with new perspectives. On one hand, everything is so nice, fluid, safe and transparent, but on the other hand, it is full of blackholes making everything unseen and chaotic.

All these brought more individualization as well as more dependence on digitalization. Digital technology is a crucial part of these developments and has determined their form to some extent. The computerizations of banking, international currency exchange, and trading have contributed considerably to the rise of globalization and financial liberalization. The possibilities of convergence and integration offered by digital technology have led to its domination of technical developments in media and communications. Computers and specifically mobile phones also became an essential means to manage and manipulate the vast amounts of data required by large techno-scientific projects. The concurrent development of science, media, and capital under the aegis of digital technology has a kind of fast-forward effect in which everything appears to take place at an accelerated rate and to produce a dramatic change almost immediately. There seems to be no way to hide. This incites both euphoria and anxiety, not least because of the shocking pace at which things happen. One has barely enough time to register one set of events and its possible consequences when another arises to make it irrelevant. At the same time, these events offer extraordinary challenges to the preconceptions through which people may negotiate their existence. These include, for example, the eradication of physical distance and the dissolution of material reality by virtual or telecommunications technologies or the apparent end of the human and the rise of the so-called “post-human” as a result of advances in cybernetics, robotics, and research into consciousness and intelligence.

Generally, not only the concept of the non-changing nature of the individuals but also the characteristics of the societies would be shaped through the new media

applications. Most of the people take media as the essential source of information yet, they just look at it as a kind of taboo as it is, not to be touched, changed, or transformed. The medium function of the media is usually missed and neglected. Mostly, media is rather positioned as an aim, as a target, in the form of being in the media or network, to be seen by the other people, etc. Its function of making up a bridge between the self and the society or the position we are in and the betterment of the position is usually neglected. Today's media requiring different types of literacies is forcing people to participate, to produce, and to change more than ever. Almost all the pieces of news require the audience to take any action or have a position regarding the handled topic as to polarize society.

According to Vromen (2017, p.3), *"the internet has brought profound changes to citizen engagement with politics and changed the practices of mobilization and organization. These changes to contemporary political engagement and organization."*

There might be so many different definitions but in its shortest form, *"Digital Citizenship is the ability to participate in a digital society, yet the main question is what it means to invoke the notion of citizenship in relation to the use of technology?"* (Mossberger et al., 2008, p.1). More than half a century ago, British sociologist T. H. Marshall (1992, p.8) defined citizenship as *"endowing all members of a political community with certain civil, political, and social rights of membership, including the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society"*.

The main question is what digital citizenship is in today's conditions and why it becomes essential for individuals to become contributing members of a digital society. Moreover, why should anyone -administrators, teachers, parents, students- even be concerned with such a thing as a part of the digital society? The term citizen is most commonly defined as *"a native or naturalized person who owes allegiance to a larger state or collective and who shares in the rights and responsibilities afforded all members of that collective"* (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>). As the definition states, a citizen both works for and benefits from a larger society.

According to Ribble and Bailey (2007, p.7) the concept of digital citizenship, then, reinforces the positive aspects of technology so that everyone can work and play in this digital world. To date, few social guidelines have been developed for the use of digital technologies. The society might decide that anarchy should be the norm or digital technology should be used for the benefit of all. This is why those of us who work for and benefit from a larger society need to be involved in deciding how best to support digital technology in our communities. This is why there needs to be digital citizenship as well as digital literacy.

According to Gere (2008, p.15) *"given how important digital technology has become to our lives it is useful to know what the word 'digital' actual means. In technical terms, it is used to refer to data in the form of discrete elements. Though it could refer to almost any system, numerical, linguistic or otherwise, used to describe phenomena in discrete terms over the last 60 or so years, the word has become synonymous with the technology which has made much of the aforementioned possible, electronic digital binary computers"*.

For centuries, citizenship was discussed and certain rules were presented to maintain the right type of citizenship. Even if the concept of citizenship does not occur in all cultures and eras of history, the ones having it tried to conceptualize it in its best possible way considering the requirements of the time. To most people, citizenship involves only voting to delineate the position of the individual simply displaying ideas for or against the governmental issues. Yet, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, citizenship involves more than that. To Brysk & Shafir, *"citizenship is a mechanism for allocating rights and claims through political membership"*. According to the writers in the past two centuries or so, citizenship has been nested in nation-states. Globalization is a package of transnational flows of people, production, investment, information, ideas, and authority. As exchange intensifies across borders, such globalization changes the nature of citizenship. They state that *globalization has put some flows out of the reach of states, putting rights at risk, but also created new levels of membership and rights claims. Among the changes it has wrought, globalization coincides with a universal, de-territorialized, and post-national human rights regime* (Brysk & Shafir, 2004, p.3).

On the other hand, Bryan S. Turner (1993, p.2) emphasizes that *"citizenship is the product of a range of discourses tied to social institutions"*. These discourses create a framework of inclusion (for some) and organize individuals' access to rights to resources; *"citizenship may be defined as that set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and groups"*.

Traditional studies of citizen participation used mass survey research to identify how citizens attempt to influence government through individual actions and group memberships. Well-known contemporary research has moved away from the simple binary of conventional versus non-conventional understandings of individual acts of participation to develop more multifaceted typologies to be more inclusive of current citizen-led practices. However, to Vromen, *"key action repertoires and substantial theorizing on how citizens mobilize resources for participation still focus on formal political involvements directed at the state"* (Vromen, 2017, p.12).

Regarding the latest trends in new media, it would be nice to consider Chadwick (2013, p.207) focusing on the interdependent relationships between traditional and new media, suggesting that political actors are potentially enabled in the digital context as *"power in the hybrid media system is exercised by those who are successfully able to create, tap or steer information flows in ways that suit their goals and in ways that modify, enable or disable others' agency, across and between a range of older and newer media settings"*.

Citizenship in its modern sense involves more than voting and as Vromen stated, *"social media has become embedded in the lives of ordinary citizens as it is used in all kinds of ways for information sharing and mobilization-based politics"* (2017, pp.69). The hybridity in media systems has also enhanced the capacity of organizations and movements to benefit from these new approaches to politics. The theoretical concepts of individualized collective action and social movement in societies were developed before the emergence of social media and the rapid escalation of digital politics. Yet, it is easy to see how the

hybrid and personalized processes are at work in social media sharing and connected actions. Usually, these are the digital extension or multiplication of these overarching changes in the ways citizen engage and mobilize for political decision making and social change. *“Questions, however, still remain about the capacity of these digital organizations and movements to challenge political institutions when they are reliant on corporate social media and committed to campaigns that can be readily personalized to create broad-ranging, affective connections”* (Vromen, 2017, pp.69-70).

To Cardoso, the new media thus allow for: new and vast communication spaces for traveling, visiting and participating; the possibility of generating new spaces, such as sites, newsgroups, chat rooms, networks, action groups, etc.; the hypertextual structure according to an extensive “interspatiality”; the capacity of freedom of movement between different communicative spaces; personalization of information from countless sources; the development of channels of interactivity with the formal political system and its contacts with parties and representatives; and the online organization of groups and movements (Cardoso, 2006, p.345). *The effects of the Internet may not be so much in creating a “brave new world” of politics online as in promoting the availability of information and restoring some of the capacity of linkage institutions such as political parties* as Mossberger et al. point out (2008, p.145).

The concept of the non-changing nature of the individual and society could be shaped through the media and new media applications. Most people use media as their main source of information, but consider it as a trustworthy authority, something not to be touched, changed or transformed. The medium function of the media is usually missed and neglected. Instead, the media mostly is positioned as an aim, as a target: people desire to be seen in the media by others, etc. Its function of serving as a bridge between self and society, or between the positions the people are in and the upper levels of the ladder is usually neglected. Today’s media, new media and social media require different types of literacy forcing people to participate, to produce, and to change more than ever and faster. Almost all news items invite their audience to take action or adopt a position regarding the topic so as to polarize society.

The 2009 data on the subject predicts that we are exposed to a 2.6 words per second squeeze of information in our daily lives. In this respect, for example, the average American is exposed to about 100,500 words every day (Bohn & Short, 2009). According to the data, it is estimated that in 2008 Americans consumed about 1.3 trillion hours of information outside of work, which is an average of about 12 hours per person per day. The daily media consumption of an average person on an average day reached 3.6 zettabytes and 1.080 trillion words, corresponding to 100,500 words and 34 gigabytes (Bohn & Short, 2009, p. 980-981). In such a speedy flow of information all the images and concepts mix with each other having no opportunity of proving themselves about their real meaning in the real world. Since the new age is characterized by the interconnection of peoples, cultures, technologies, markets, problems, and politics on a world scale, people should think it over and over when it comes to prejudices, pre-agreed information, and old-established values to help them understand and judge the world.

Understanding the world, people from other countries and their cultures, lives, and etc. is not a luxury or dream but it becomes a prerequisite requiring critical thinking. To be a global citizen, one must try to understand what people are doing all over in the world. While doing that, first, one should forget what we know about people, in other words, we have to eliminate our prejudices and stereotype ideas. People just do not have enough time to think about the origin of these thoughts and values: They never think of who shaped them or what made them think or behave in such a particular way. Due to their limited information and criteria they do not improve much of their mathematical skills such as comparing and contrasting, understanding cause and effect relationships, reasoning, identifying the objects, or making judgments.

There seems to be two main dilemmas involved in the process of outreaching the decision making processes. One handicap is that the decision-making processes are mainly headed by the second-hand information, yet, nothing compares to the importance of the firsthand experience. As pointed out in Pembecioğlu, (2012, p.53) *there are a lot of factors affecting the decision-making process. Mainly, one's previous register, culture, intuitions play a paramount role in one's decisions. The abilities, capabilities and possible behaviour patterns also force us to gain new information and to learn new communication types. When it comes to "Communication and Persuasion" the recent media-centred messages gain more importance than the other previously given or registered ones. What is meant by 'media-centred' is the messages served by the same media in different ways as to establish a certain criteria or develop a certain context, point of view.*

Thus, whenever the media is used the ideology or phenomenon is repeated as to establish stratificational structures of thinking. These messages have more impact on the individual than the other messages. For example, people usually think when they're spending their money when it's cash, but they tend to spend it easier via a credit card. So, it is difficult to position the concrete things, but it is easier with the absolute subjects in salience. In other words, decision-making processes become more and more complex when it comes to the virtual reality of the modern world. Which is more important for the individual to make up his/her mind? (the factors having an impact on the decision-making process might be structure, function, content, context, aesthetics, ethics, history, emotions, ego, passion, power, the ones above you, the ones below you, the others, the ones by your side, the ones behind, the ones ahead, instincts, horoscopes, hormones, super-ego, identity, culture, tradition, past, future, heritage, religion, society, self, status, rules, limitations, anthropology, induction, deduction, geometry, physics, chemistry, similar, stories, previous registers, or self-experience, etc.).

The second handicap is that even if the messages are somewhat unified and standardized the content and context are excluded to fit into the mobile world. However, each culture has a different way of consumption and digestion even if the message is somewhat wrapped up in the same code. As Lutz and others studied the balance between European and national identity, they found out that the more the multilingual and multicultural societies we become. In fifteen countries on average 52% of 15 to 25 year-olds said they had multiple identities, of their own country and of being a European. In

the UK this was 40%, in France 68% and in the Netherlands 59%. The coefficient is 0.48% and that means that in 2030 226 million (177 million in 2004) will have multiple identities. The proportion is rising: by 2030 226 million people will have multiple identities, up from 177 million in 2004 (Lutz, 2007). This means that there is no one size fitting to all. If there would be any decision making involved in citizenship issues the citizens first should be aware of the dynamics, tendencies, rules and codes of the society. Yet, especially, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most of the people are just the members of the liquid society, scattered all over the world nobody would attribute the same meaning to the same message.

However, nowadays, in the digital age, the borders lost its value and meaning and the global world became the core field of action. That's why most of the people would like to become a part of the digital world. In this way only, they feel that they could participate the global part of the actions. They also feel that they are not only the citizens of a specific country but of the world. Specific issues such as UN convention to combat desertification the planet, or Greenpeace activities to maintain the environmental justice gain importance as the worldwide problems. Taking care of the species that are in danger of extinction or helping the refugees to maintain their lives could also be counted as the activities mostly taken part.

It's not an understatement to say that the digital world has changed how we behave and function as citizens of the "real" world. We live and work and interact not only in the physical world but in a digital, virtual world as well. As educators, we must prepare students to live in a world without physical boundaries and help them learn how to work with others, virtual or otherwise. As Ribble and Bailey put it, "Citizenship" in this sense takes on a new meaning beyond our general understanding of geographical nations, states, and communities. Indeed, this new citizenship is global in nature (Ribble & Bailey, 2007, p.12). For instance, Turkish people will have to learn how to work with technology users in other countries such as India, China, and Russia to an unprecedented extent. A common framework, such as digital citizenship, provides us all with a starting point for understanding each other.

As Musgrave stated, (2016, p.205) exploration of digital citizenship suggests that young people today are using technology for a variety of reasons that span well beyond generational assumptions that they are wasting all of their time texting on their ever-present smartphones, posting status updates to social media, or playing video games to escape from reality and responsibility. Coming-of-age in a time when boundaries between real life and digital life are increasingly irrelevant -when real life is digital life- young people integrate digital technology into their activities and relationships with an array of consequences spanning from self-destruction to self-actualization.

It's not a stretch to say that digital technology has become firmly embedded into our society, to the point where it is often difficult to separate the technology from its users. The commingling of bits, bytes, headspace, and office space illustrate the importance and challenges of digital citizenship. On one hand, it's not the citizenship becoming digital, it's the digital world making all the concepts digitalized. On the other hand, unlike in the good old days, today's citizens do not attribute the similar meanings

to the concept of citizenship. With the large flows of refugees in this last decade, people feel neither a real responsibility nor a deep attachment to the place they inhabit at the moment. As if it's steering a great boat, it seems that everybody is about to leave it any minute and would be able to swing to the next place or switch to a different identity. Everyone is ready to leave the boat at the slightest sign of crisis in order to become a passenger of another boat. Not only do the people engage in this movement to escape from a possible tragedy, but also, they aim to change their identity, lifestyle, and prospects for the future. Thus, nothing seems to be logical enough to expect a certain logical citizenship understanding.

Sending a family photo, or twitting about your location might be accepted as a way of digitalization but it does not include citizenship aspect except than sharing the individual sphere with the common public. However, stating your political perspective in a digital platform might be understood as an attempt to decipher your social-political understanding or even as an attempt to influence the others with your opinion. Thus, it might be controlled by law.

Digital citizenship involves not only sending individual messages but also becoming a part of the digital society and having a say in it. Just like the traditional media had in the past, the modern media makes use of certain tools, more visualized and more questionable this time. This might be referred to as gaining kind of public acceptance for the positions like influencers or public figures, opinion leaders, gate keepers as well as boundary spanners. Digital citizenship might be understood as the sharing the feelings, joys or sorrows and pains of the others near or far. Just like IoT units, humanity seems to be turning to a single body, sensing all the reactions, realities in a single act.

Literacy is a dynamic concept that has changed over time and in response to different cultural expectations. Traditionally it was associated with reading and writing skills, yet, in today's world, the concept of literacy is not limited to knowing a language or being effective in oral or symbolic communication, but also involves socio-cultural and functional knowledge of the language in context. It also requires the symbolic field analysis even if you are not capable of that language or culture. As Pembecioğlu puts it, (2019) *"the drawings mean more than the signs, unless you know the story behind. Literacy thus involves more than the sign itself covering all the knowledge of the past, history, traditions, culture and functional knowledge of all possible languages throughout the world. It covers not only the four language skills but beyond that a civic participation as well as being able to establish networks in the society."* Thus, public consensus on certain images and associating them with certain values count more than the type of literacy referring to the individual competencies such as reading and reading aloud or writing. That's why Göbeklitepe, Şanlıurfa in Turkey claimed to be the roots of civilization dated back to the Neolithic age, with its estimated BC 12.000 years age stands for prominent world heritage and is referred to as the 'zero point of history'.

The literacy skills of the past might still be discussed as well as the skills of today's literacy concept. Mainly handled as the ability to read, write and use arithmetic, the concept of literacy now goes beyond language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and



listening, to cover, for example, skills in civic participation and the ability to establish social networks. It seems that the citizenship concept differs throughout time due to the changing dynamics of society. As Cardoso pointed out in today's societies and predictably in the near future as well, we are experiencing an unparalleled condition in our history that has created a new paradigm for the participation of individuals in society. That new paradigm is the fact that, for the first time, the conditions that make a citizen economically more valuable in the work sphere and those that enable full civic participation are the same: collecting, processing and sharing of information constitute the main conditions for the generation of wealth and economic success and also provide the necessary conditions for the full exercise of citizenship. In both dimensions, success depends on the information literacy of the individuals (Cardoso; 2006, pp.509-510).

In a society in which mediation and public consensus play a central role, the management of citizenship not only has to do with the concretization of a given action or taking a certain position. Most of the time our use of the mediation space has nothing to do with specific, pre-defined objectives and what we essentially do is to combine looking, listening, reading and observing, adding information in order to process it and transform it into knowledge. Our television and Internet practices have more in common with "window shopping" than actually "going shopping". To Cardoso, just as people mostly surf the Internet without having concrete objectives, the television viewing tends to be more the result of discovering "what's on" than the concrete desire of watching a program or series consciously chosen, thus giving rise to a phenomenon such as zapping (Cardoso, 2006, p.512).

Cardoso also points out that civic participation in the informational societies implies, in addition to our non-mediated social relationships, extensive knowledge of the mediated reality. It is that knowledge – the sum of many segmented interests (which differ from subject to subject) – that constitutes the foundation for the management of citizenship (Cardoso, 2006, p.512). Only through that free -and not previously guided- experimentation with reading newspapers, watching television, surfing the Internet, listening to radio, experimenting mobile phone SMS functions, does one obtain the conditions necessary for the development of the informational literacy required by each person to be able to assert themselves in the different spheres of citizenship and achieve their autonomy objectives. Citizenship in the Information Age is also a product of the different windows that we browse on the Internet because only if we are aware of the diversity, they contain can we make the right choices.

For example in the days of COVID-19 Pandemic, much of the social media constituted involved reminders of civic society rules such as having the masks, keeping the social distance, washing hands frequently. The ones having no digital literacy or lacking the appropriate skills of following the warnings were punished. The government also published new rules, sending SMS to each and every citizen, and as of Monday, June 22, 2020, those who do not comply with the obligation to wear a mask will be fined 900 lira in accordance with Article 282 of the Public Health Law (<https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/maskesiz-sokaga-cikma-yasagi-hangi-illerde->

[maskesiz-gezmenin-cezasi-kac-tl-6241053](https://www.a3haber.com/2020/06/24/icisleri-bakanligi-acikladi-maske-takmadigi-icin-kac-kisiye-ceza-kesildi/)). Due to the coronavirus measures Ministry of Interior announced that 7017 people acted contrary to the mask wearing requirement each had a 900 TL penalty cut (<https://www.a3haber.com/2020/06/24/icisleri-bakanligi-acikladi-maske-takmadigi-icin-kac-kisiye-ceza-kesildi/>). Most of those who were sentenced stated that they were not aware of this rule or the fine, and photographs published in the media proved that they were representing the low socio-economic and literacy levels of the society. Nowadays, having a HES code became necessary to be involved into the public places or transportation centers to make it easier to follow the track of the COVID-19 patients.

This period pioneered the healthiest process of informing the people due to pandemic crises and in this process, digital literacy has carried an extremely important dimension (<https://www.webtekno.com/turkiye-sahte-haberlere-en-cok-guvenen-country-was-h48103.html>). At a point where mobile applications were put into practice where individuals could question the security of their own or the places they live. It means that those who are not digitally illiterate and who do not have internet access will have big problems.

All these rules aim to secure the places we live in as Warschauer puts forward. He argues, information technology has assumed a secure place today in the civilized life and prevailing standards of many societies. In much the same way that education has promoted democracy and economic growth, the Internet has the potential to benefit society as a whole, and facilitate the membership and participation of individuals within the society. Thus, digital citizenship encourages what has elsewhere been called social inclusion (Warschauer, 2003).

## 2. Aim and Methodology

As a way of understanding the complexity of digital citizenship and the issues of technology use, abuse, and misuse, nine elements identified (Ribble & Bailey, 2007, p.10) as the norms of appropriate, responsible behavior with regard to technology use there many factors such as digital access, digital commerce, digital communication, digital literacy, digital etiquette, digital law, digital rights and responsibilities, digital health and wellness and digital security.

This paper aims to question how the decisions of the community are formed whereas the individuals may not be able to form their own opinions. It also aims to explore the new digital citizenship concept as well as the recent digital public opinion applications. Whereas, it questions which media is used most for the citizenship applications, it exemplifies how the data is pulled out through the traditional public sources and how they are linked into the digital world as to make up a new digital public opinion sooner than ever. The reactions and counter-reactions to the digital public opinion are much more visible, measurable and valuable since it causes rapid and radical changes in the society.

Opposing to mundane citizenship, digital citizenship is rather a new concept appearing recently to define a person utilizing Information Technologies (IT) in order to engage in society, politics, and government participation. Online media forums function as shapers of the digital public opinion for this new type of digital citizens. This new digital world now requires instant decisions, likes and dislikes to be polarized quickly as to shape the digital public opinion. It's much easier to get to know what the topic is, how the details are covered, it's much easier gathering, interpreting, presenting and postponing the opinions and information.

Being a keystone in all forms of social media communication, interactivity among influencers and followers is central to describing influencers' communicative strategies. Interactivity on twitter takes different forms and actions, including tweet favoriting, retweeting and sentiment analysis of tweet texts.

Experiencing COVID-19, humanity became more sensitive about what's going on the other side of the world as well as the situation in his/her own borders. Thus, digital citizenship brought us to a new dimension as to care more of the others. This might be the reason why the sentiment analysis became an important tool of understanding the media messages. As Simon et al. mentioned "*Sentiment analysis or opinion mining has been defined as the task of finding the opinions of authors about specific organizations*" (2014).

Unlike the behaviors of the individuals in the society (except the so open and mediatic ones) it is possible to keep the track of the individuals in digital spaces. What we call the digital footsteps of the people could help us in a way, yet, the digital footsteps of the society might be interpreted in a different way. This means, everybody here and there is shouting the same words or feeling the same pain for a certain reason.

Regarding the circulation of data all around, a fourfold main applications route could be portrayed: Transferring the facts to the public, exchange of information between verified account and followers, and obtaining new followers (boundary spanners). Informative postings and sharings might contribute to contextual records to recognize the theme or crisis in a better way. These consist of the messages of authority, the theme-related causes, and reactions.

This paper aims to handle the issue of fire in Moria, a little island in Greece, having a fire on 08.09.2020, and leaving 13.000 refugees without a shelter. Apart from the media coverage of the event, this paper aims to have a semantic analysis of the #Moria messages aiming to portray the expectations of forming digital public opinion and media representations of digital citizenship covering almost all of the world agenda after the event.

This paper accepts social media as a narrative tool of citizenship and mostly a global one. Apart from the individual issues, the citizenship issues are also discussed in the public platform and people have a voice even more than before with their opinion pools, hashtags, etc. Using the decision-making steps through following the agenda seems to be easier than making up your own mind. Or comparing and contrasting the different ideas that seem to be easier with transparent and accessible media. Thus people

seem to be more productive, cooperative, and collaborative when it comes to civic or global issues.

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### 3. Findings and Interpretation

Mória Reception and Identification Centre or better known as Mória Refugee Camp, or just "Mória", is the largest refugee camp in Europe, located outside the village of Moria (Greek: Μόρια, Mória) near Mytilene. Enclosed with barbed wire and a chain-link fence, the military camp serves as a European Union "hotspot". It is described by Human Rights Watch as an open-air prison. There were many hashtags about Moria before the fire on 08.09.2020. For example, in August 2018, it was dubbed by the field coordinator of Doctors Without Borders "The worst refugee camp on earth", as reported by the BBC (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v-OHi3iGQI>). According to the reports, even if, in the beginning, the camp was built to accommodate around 3,000 people, it was full of around 20,000 refugees of whom 6,000 to 7000 were children under the age of 18. The Greek government was blamed too much not to give enough space to the refugees and refugees were blamed to cut down around 5000 olive trees, some of them centuries old. The despair in the camp was so deep that the workers were complaining about the suicide cases of children even under 10 years old (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45271194>).

Actually, the camp opened in 2015 and was initially designed as a transit post for people to stay for a matter of days - but some have been there for years. The last occasion of the camp was the COVID-19 positive cases alerting everyone. On 8 September 2020, a fire badly damaged the camp of more than 12,000 asylum seekers, which may have been started deliberately to protest quarantine measures, that came after detecting positive COVID-19 cases in the camp (<https://www.dw.com/en/greece-refugee-camp-fire/a-54861061>). On 10 September, three Greek ships were sent to help shelter the migrants (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54094683>). And by 10 September, the camp was almost completely destroyed (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/greece-lesbos-moria-camp-fire-1.5718519>). Most of the refugees were left homeless on the street. During protests demanding their evacuation, Greek police fired tear gas at them (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/12/greek-riot-police-fire-teargas-at-refugees-campaigning-to-leave-lesbos>).



mobilizing them into their countries. The civic understanding and the understanding of the pain and helplessness were so transparent. Apart from the hate speech that usually occurs in such situations, these were the screams of thousands of people to become the voice of the voiceless. Unlike the other situations in the past, these messages were not blaming the camp conditions or the governmental bodies throwing up to their faults, yet, offering solutions, exposing mediating points, or in other words, trying to become a part of the solution.

Over the past two years, words like “bots”, “botnets”, and “trolls” have entered mainstream conversations about social networks and their impact on democracies. However, malicious social media accounts have often been mislabeled, derailing the conversations about them from substance to definitions. Yet, referring to the Moria case, almost all the messages were sent by official bodies or individuals, and civic groups and associations in Europe and only a few by the refugees.

The competitive analysis results prove that apart from the #Moria, there were also other topics associated with #refugeesgr (1241), #noborders (91), and #Lesvos (871). That means the name Moria is associated with them as well. However, the number of Moria hashtags were almost doubled.

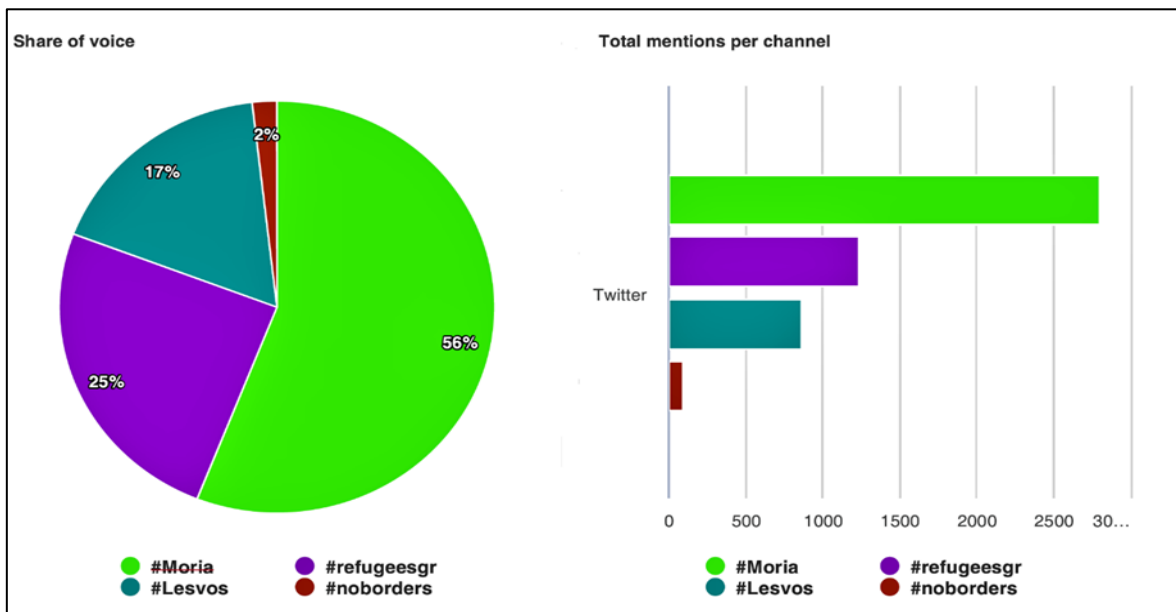
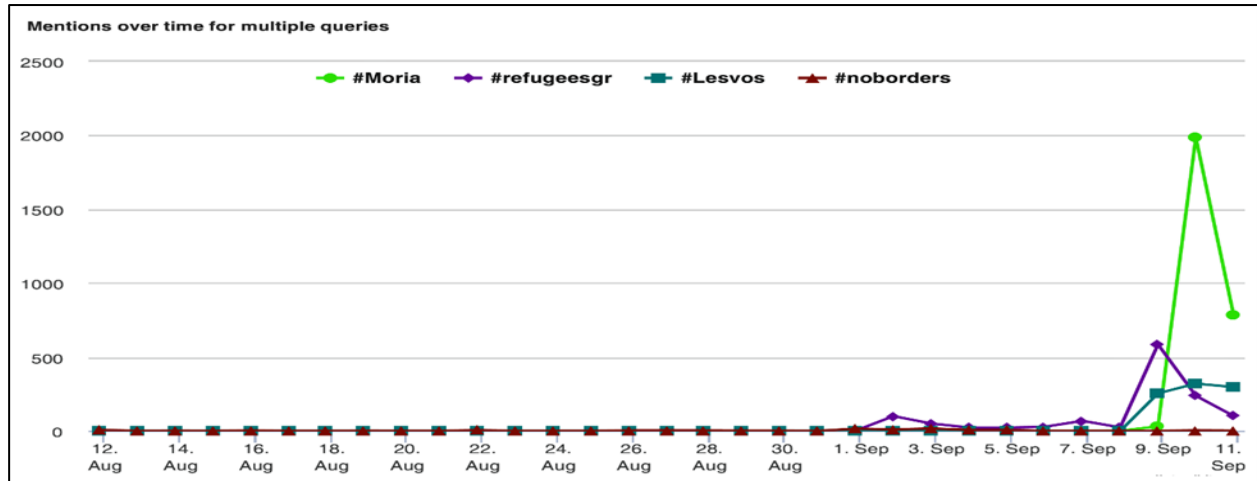


Figure 3: The Twitter Messages with #Moria between 11.08.2020-11.009.2020

The problem of analyzing Twitter messages is that they just appear all of a sudden and vanish so quickly. The handled topic might be TT just for a few hours and if the success is not enough for the activating bodies the other days they appear again with many more messages to make it more successful. Usually, the NGOs and other civic society units make it possible. However, in Moria case, it was not only the organized bodies but humble individuals who were taking a share. The dissemination of the messages under certain different headings proves that there were main topics to be discussed.



Sometimes, even if the number of Twitter messages were high the message does not reach wider circles and the level of interaction is limited. However, for the Twitter messages of #Moria, the number of the total impressions reached up to 7112142, whereas for the #refugeesgr it was 2271475. The 91 #noborders messages had a total impression of 44232 and 871 #Lesvos messages activated 1975338 total impressions.



**Figure 4:** Competitive Analysis of #Moria, #refugeesgr, #noborders and #Lesvos

It was interesting that a fire in one country could have an impact in almost all over the world, activating all citizens. That means digital citizenship carries the issues not only to the local or regional platforms but to a more global platform to be discussed. Thus, throughout many countries, civic topics, such as citizenship, identity, refugees, children, mobility, rights, and freedom were discussed. The messages involving solution matters were discussing the idea of welcoming the homeless refugees of Moria to their own countries.

Country	Reaction	Percentage
USA	1486	53,0
Greece	309	11,0
UK	200	7,1
Germany	195	7,0
Belgium	111	4,0
France	51	1,8
Netherlands	50	1,8
Spain	48	1,7
Italy	45	1,6
India	36	1,3
Other countries	271	9,7
Total	2802	

**Figure 5:** The Distribution of the Twitter Messages

During the case, the impact of social media put it in such a way that, the traditional media covered all the details in Greece and created a more transparent platform to convey

the messages up to the governmental bodies. Due to the public pressure, most of the governmental bodies had explanations regarding the changes in their refugee policy. Because their responsibility was set as not only dealing with the citizenship issues in their countries anymore but also a more global more humane citizenship.

It's always been a discussion when do human beings really become human! Regarding the thousands of centuries, the language, the culture, all the heritage couldn't make humans behave as humans except the occurrence of the concept of sacrifice. Somebody doing something meaningful for another person is the utmost level of humanity. Let it be the person is someone known or unknown, a citizen or a refugee, this point of sacrifice is the beginning of a kind of unification, mediation, and real understanding. Only at that point, we may think of feeling in the same or similar way, feeling empathy for the other.

Just after the fire and emergent crisis, the headlines of the newspapers were full of new solution offers. One of the main issues were related with COVID-19. Greece reports first coronavirus case in Moria migrant camp on Lesbos (02.09.2020). As the headline puts it, Greece has confirmed the first case of COVID-19 at an overcrowded migrant camp on the island of Lesbos. Officials say the infected man has been isolated and camp authorities are tracing his contacts (<https://www.dw.com/en/greece-reports-first-coronavirus-case-in-moria-migrant-camp-on-lesbos/a-54792666>).

The following week the newspapers were talking about Berlin chair protesters call for evacuation of Moria refugee camp in Greece (07.09.2020). Protesters have set up chairs in Berlin to represent residents of the overcrowded Moria camp in Greece. They say the first positive coronavirus test at the camp has made the need for intervention even more urgent (<https://www.dw.com/en/berlin-chair-protesters-call-for-evacuation-of-moria-refugee-camp-in-greece/a-54840567>). This headline proves that one country's citizens were not limited by the rules of that country and the refugee issue is considered to be somewhat more global and include more sensitivity that other countries may have a voice on that topic.

Just two days later, the newspapers would be delivering the fire issue with the headline: Thousands flee fire at Greece's largest migrant camp (<https://www.dw.com/en/greece-refugee-camp-fire/a-54861061>). Several fires have mostly destroyed the Moria refugee camp, home to more than 12,000 asylum seekers. There are no known casualties so far. Authorities are now investigating reports of arson. This was the call of the duty, this was the simple picture of helplessness, so clear and vivid that all the world reflected on it. Even if there were other news providing stories of the Moria refugee camp, details of the desperate camplife and its tortured history, one other headline, "Moria migrants: German state offers to take in 1,000 refugees from Greece" (<https://www.dw.com/en/moria-migrants-germany-greece-lesbos/a-54866264>) proves how digital citizenship could help forming citizenship perspectives and bringing up urgent decision making policies in such situations. The German state of North Rhine-Westphalia has said it's willing in 1,000 refugees displaced from their homes in a camp in a major fire on the island of Lesbos. Foreign Minister Maas called on other EU states



to help. One other important point is that asking for 1000 refugees was a brave decision compared to the Netherlands stating their wish as to welcome 50 refugee kids and Finland's yes to 11 only.

Just hours later, another headline strikes the audience: Germany and France will take in 400 children from Greece's refugee camp (<https://www.dw.com/en/moria-migrants-germany-france-will-take-in-400-children-from-greeces-refugee-camp/a-54882965>). This headline proves how different countries could collaborate easily in case of crises. Even if what is meant by Berlin and Paris might not be clear they seem to be the symbol of the two countries Germany and France opening their arms for 400 kids from the camp. This decision also proves how difficult decisions are made within minutes, saving the lives of the kids and how the leaders and the citizens of the other countries reach out for possible solutions. The subtitle also emphasizes the importance of the 'shared responsibilities' of other EU nations. Even if the other EU states feel the pressure of the issue, the headlines keep on calling the victims as Lesbos migrants or Moria migrants, homeless, refugees, migrants, unaccompanied kids or displaced people. EU seems to be in trouble even naming them as well as locating them or accepting them as citizens.

This was not only the decision of the authorities but also the decisions of the citizens motivating them in a certain way or in other words it was the victory of the digital citizenship. Half of the Germans proved to be in favor of taking refugees from Moria. Fifty percent of the respondents in a survey conducted in Germany expressed their opinion in favor of taking refugees who became homeless after the fire in Moria camp (<https://www.dw.com/tr/almanların-yarısı-moriadan-sigmacı-alınmasından-yana/a-54888366>).

Soon appeared the headline "Germany to take in some 1,500 migrants from Greece" (15.09.2020) it is important to see how the decision making strategies of the civic society could work: Angela Merkel's government has said Germany will take in additional migrants from Greece and in particular Lesbos. More than 12,000 people were left homeless by fires at the refugee camp Moria (<https://www.dw.com/en/germany-to-take-in-some-1500-migrants-from-greece/a-54930075>).

About a week later, the most striking headline occurs: Thousands march in Berlin to demand Germany take in Moria refugees (<https://www.dw.com/en/thousands-march-in-berlin-to-demand-germany-take-in-moria-refugees/a-54997956>). The subheading continues: Around 5,000 demonstrators have marched in Berlin to call on Germany to do more for refugees and migrants made homeless in Greece. Protesters said the government should not block state or local efforts to help. Protesters in the German capital held signs bearing sayings such as "We have a space" and "Leave no one behind." Demonstrators demanded greater action from Germany and said the federal government should not block individual states or municipalities from taking in refugees on their own, an offer that several parties have made. Even if Germany's government last week said the country would accept around 1,500 migrants consisting of 408 families with children, the individuals still participated into the protests. Perhaps, in a way it was not their own

government appearing to be volunteering from the very beginning to do their best as they could. The German government also toed a mark for those who seem to be reluctant to pay attention to their shared responsibilities. However, what bring those 5000 people to marching together was not their negative feelings for their government but the wish of raising awareness for the situation. In other words, during the COVID-19 Pandemic crises, with their masks on, facing all the difficulties of hygiene or the rules of keeping the distance, they were not walking for themselves but for humanity. They were not shouting out loud nor they were protesting violently, it was a silent walk for the sake of the “unknown others”. That means, they were having empathy with the people they’ve never seen or met before.

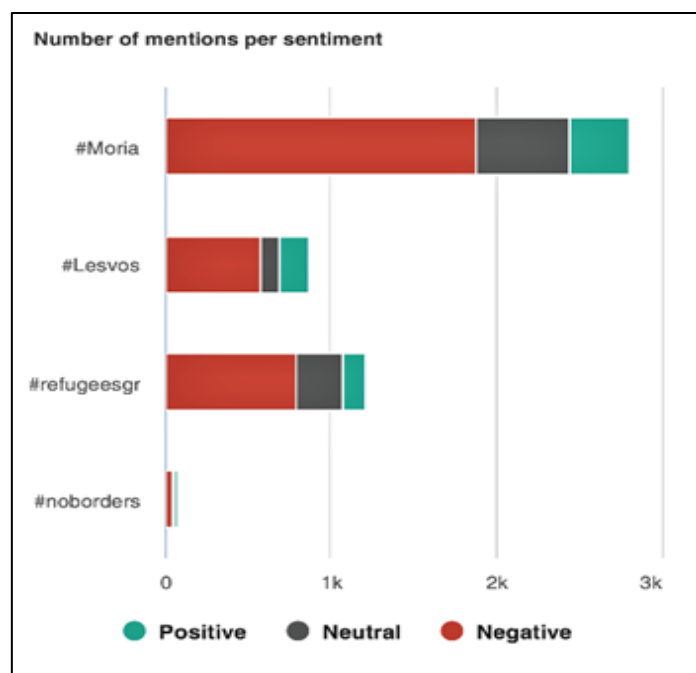


Figure 6: The Number of the Mentions per Sentiment

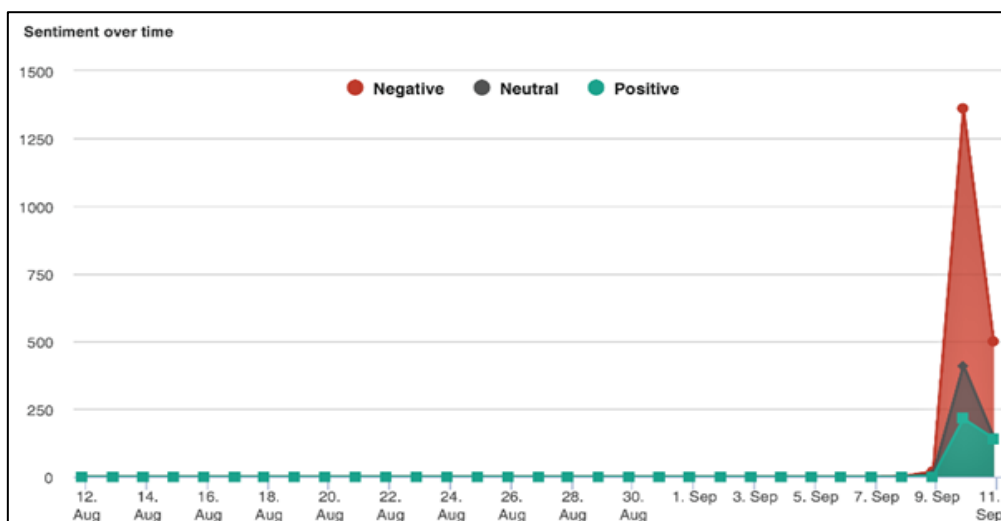


Figure 7: Distribution of the Sentiment over Time

Figure 6 visualizes the breakdown of sentiment results in a competitive analysis by using sentiment analysis using the workbench data application. Compared to the other hashtags, #Moria had proved to reach the highest sentimental value. The sentiment rates show us the level of negativity, neutrality and positivity. Figure 7 brings forth the fluctuation, the speed and density of it within a specific time. However, evaluating the results, we see that the rate of negativity tends to have a strong decline in a few days' time, yet, the others' decline seem to be not that much. That means, people, in a way tend to understand each other and have mutual sentiments, tolerance or consensus. This also means having empathy for the other people which is one of main dynamics of citizenship.

#### 4. Conclusion

Citizenship issues are discussed for centuries and seem to be discussed even more. Nowadays we feel advantageous due to the fact that we are passing through the digital era. The main difference between the traditional concept of citizenship and digital citizenship lies in the thin line of freedom and the way of voicing the self in a better and visible way. The digital citizenship issues tend to be more problematic with the content, context, discourse, structure, and function of the tools. Also, accessibility, availability, validity, and reliability problems might occur on the way. Yet, regarding the Moria case, digital citizenship seems to be working properly as to motivate around 5000 people marching in the streets. The decision-making processes and the impact seem to be more effective in terms of digital citizenship, as well as collaboration and cooperation. The most dangerous part is the polarization that might occur suddenly and might give way to contradictory ideas and produce chaos instead of mutual understanding.

Within the scope of this study, the emotional analysis of the Twitter messages #Moria is followed within a certain period of time. Since the messages sent were mainly in English, including only one Italian and one Romanian one, the emotional analysis values were calculated easily. For the sentiment analysis of tweets, the workbench social media analysis program was used. A total of 2802 tweets were analyzed and then an ordinary sentiment score is generated.

According to the data, it is proved that the messages having the 9th September and 11th September, rank more than ever. This sudden burst is due to the fire in the Lesbos island, Moria Camp. Even if the people were in the coronavirus outbreak process. This significant issue mobilized them to the streets and increased the emotional effects of Twitter messages. Though a bit detached and frosty, away from society, people felt warm enough to fight for the rights of the others and offered solutions, providing a kind of pressure on their government. Even if the total number of the tweets reach only 2802 these were coming from near and far, from all over the world and wishing the same thing: justice.

Twitter is not only a microblogging tool but also an increasingly critical supply of statistics. The sentiment ratio of the positive messages was reaching 13% only whereas the neutral perspective covered 20%. The messages were mainly negative regarding their

sentiment ratio, 67% of them were negative. Including all the sentiment categories, these total mentions of 5005, turned to be 11403187 total impressions including the favorited or retweeted ones. This proves that Twitter is used not only as a communication tool, a means of social media but also as a crisis management communication tool is followed more closely and with interest during the coronavirus process.

The fully digital society of the future is sometimes imagined and represented as mechanical; or portrayed in films by cold and distant behaviors without feelings, founded upon rules and norms. In such gloomy and monotonous representations, the main importance of the human being is degraded into the technological machinery. This approach could be experienced in most of the future films, books, and other narratives. The future seems to be eliminating emotions of humanity yet bringing smart people to the fore with their dull facial expressions. In such a world real digitalization is prohibited or somewhat obstructed to avoid its negative impact, and the freedom that it could provide is in its limited network. That means freedom in the future is neglected or specifically disregarded, instead of being a part of the system gains importance. None of the new forms of literacy is replacing traditional literacy. Yet digital literacy is seen as an essential requirement for twenty-first-century citizenship despite there is no universally agreed definition of it. In this respect perhaps the links between digital literacy and citizenship should be made clearer.

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