



## REVIEW ARTICLE

# STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MASS MEDIA AND INTERNET, AND THE RESULTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MASS MEDIA BASED HEGEMONIC PUBLIC SPHERE AND INTERNET BASED DISCURSIVE PUBLIC SPHERE

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### ABSTRACT

Recent advancements in ICTs, especially internet, has been transfiguring the nature and the domain of the public sphere significantly. Though the idea of internet as a public sphere is challenged with many critics not disposed to accept it as a public sphere, the remarkable impact that the internet has been able to bring on the nature of public sphere, or at least its role in impelling the contents that are discussed in the public sphere makes us to question whether the stand of these critics in dismissing the internet as public sphere is justifiable or not. Any advancements in communication, interaction related platforms are bound to influence the way public interact, and the interaction modes obviously influence all public sphere related outcomes. The fact that internet is a better mode of communication than any other mode of communication that we have experienced so far, is an indisputable fact. The question is whether internet related platforms, or interactions through these platforms can be called as rational-critical debate that is expected to take place in a public sphere. As a matter of fact internet is a world of many things, and acting as a public sphere, or acting as a platform to accommodate rational-critical debate is one among the many aspects that the internet does. Nonetheless, the transference of audience from mass media to internet for each and every aspect indicates that the internet has swamped, and replaced mass media as a primary source of public sphere. Access to internet is becoming relatively cheaper vis-à-vis mass media. Besides being economical, the internet also provides speed in communication, and the best dimension of internet as a mode of communication is, it acts as a two way mode of communication where the parties involved can interact with each other in a democratic manner i.e., without any hierarchy in the direction of flow of information. Information can originate at any end, and can reach to indefinite number of people. A mode of communication with these dimensions is destined to influence the nature of public sphere profoundly. This papers attempts to track down the structural transformation of the public sphere in sync with the changes in communication methods, by specifically looking at the structural differences between mass media and internet, and looks at how discursive the internet derived public sphere is vis-à-vis mass media based public sphere.

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## INTRODUCTION

Any reference to the concept of public sphere cannot be done without referring to Habermas's "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeoisie Society". As suggested in the title of the book, Habermas was talking about the public sphere in the bourgeoisie society during the 18<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe. Habermas defines public sphere as a free space for rational-

critical debate (Habermas, 1991). The 18<sup>th</sup> century public sphere in Western Europe, as defined by Habermas, was confined to the bourgeoisie class as it was the only class that could afford the necessary leisure to discuss issues related to the public. The discussions in the public sphere must concern the public i.e., issues or topics that are concerned about the overall cultural, socio-economic, and political aspects of the society in which the public sphere is located can be called as issues that fit the public sphere (Dahlgren, 1995). A talk or discussion on private affairs between two or more people cannot be called as an issue or rational-critical debate that

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concerns the public sphere. Hence, the rational-critical debate centered on issues concerning the overall public at large can only be called as matters that fall under the domain of public sphere. Public engagement in the bourgeoisie public sphere of the 18<sup>th</sup> century took place in the form of face-to-face interactions among the citizens in the coffee houses, saloons, and other public places (Habermas, 1991). Letters and pamphlets also played a major role in the 18<sup>th</sup> century bourgeoisie public sphere of the Western Europe. Different aspects pertaining to the then existing environment like sights of early stages of capitalism, and the emergence of the preliminary forms of print media etc. have led to the emergence of a particular form of public sphere in the Western Europe. Mere existence of public spaces do not constitute the public sphere (Habermas, 1991). The people in these spaces should interact and engage in rational-critical debate, exchange of ideas must take place, and rational conclusions must be arrived at after engaging themselves in the debate, or at least the discussions should give a progressive shape to the issues that are discussed or debated. The public sphere that existed in the Western Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was limited to certain sections only. Different structural limitations like the difficulty in exchanging of ideas due to poor communication related methods, and prevalence of small educated section etc. reasons have led to the emergence of this thin bourgeoisie public sphere (Rasmussen, 2013). Since then, this bourgeoisie public sphere has been transforming itself vibrantly based on the advancements in the communication methods. Face-to-face interactions or interaction through letters and pamphlets has been replaced with more vibrant and inclusive forms of communication methods like mass media and internet. Changes in communication methods obviously change the way people interact and the aspects that they discuss in the public sphere as it is the communication modes that allow, restrict or control the ways people interact, and the importance they assign to each and every issue. Hence, it can be convincingly argued that the changes in communication methods change the nature of the public sphere. A look at the structural changes in the communication methods may give us a clear picture on how the nature of the public sphere changed itself in sync with the communication methods. Two different modes of communication; one – the mass media and, two – the internet, have changed the nature and domain of the public sphere significantly.

### **Media and the Public Sphere**

The public sphere, as defined by Habermas, has been criticized severely for its inelasticity in terms of its access to the public (Lunat, 2008). Not all the public were part of the bourgeoisie public sphere of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe. This limitations on the public sphere of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a result of two important factors; one – the limitation in terms of the number of people who can engage themselves in the discussions on public issues, and two – the functional capacity of the communication methods to engage the public in the rational-critical debate. Only a small section of the population could engage themselves in the rational critical debate and only a few issues that these sections think important were part of the publications in the then existing rudimentary forms of press. These reasons apparently restricted the domain and nature of

the public sphere. Hence, the public sphere as explained or explored by Habermas was limited in nature. But it took the path of transformation with the spread of the mass media. As the media started catering to the middle and lower classes, the domain of the public sphere also expanded to include the masses (Dahlgren, 1995). Hence, the emergence of mass media can be credited with for creating a mass based public sphere.

Traditional forms of public sphere was restricted to those who could participate in it, and for those who could not take part in it for various reasons – private sphere was the domain that they belonged to. This does not mean a private sphere existed in opposition to the public sphere, but it can be understood that those who could not take part in the public sphere restricted themselves to the non-communicative domains, and can hence be called as not part of the rational-critical debate (Butsch, 2007). This excluded significant sections of the society from being part of the public sphere. Hence, this limited bourgeoisie public sphere can be called as a representation of the bourgeoisie interests or ideas, and the ideas of those who are not part of the public sphere faces default exclusion. This excludes the possible alternatives to the restricted-mainstream public sphere. Habermas's public sphere can be said to have emerged in the backdrop of emerging capitalism, impact of renaissance, and the emergence of preliminary forms of print media (Habermas, 1991). This public sphere, which was bourgeoisie centric in nature, could not limit its exclusivity to the bourgeoisie class alone as it started losing its exclusivity to the emerging mass media. The spread of mass media speedily expanded the inclusiveness of the public sphere. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the print media was in a position to cater to the demands of those who can read and write. This loosened up the tightly formed bourgeoisie public sphere and made it available to other sections also. To put it in other words, the bourgeoisie public sphere lost its exclusivity and was forced to accommodate the rational-critical debate of the broader sections of the society (Dahlgren, 1995).

Expansion of the domain of the public sphere to masses or inclusion of more people in the domain of the public sphere obviously changes its nature significantly as more people mean more ideas, more questions, and more alternatives. The emergence of mass media transformed the public sphere and led to the mass media based public sphere. Hence, the media can be credited with for the creation of the mass based expansive public sphere. The expansion of the public sphere coupled with the spreading democratic ideas has presented the mass media with an opportunity to play an expansive role in shaping the public sphere. The public sphere is expansive in its reach to different sections of the society apparently means that the mass media should accommodate the ideas of the masses. Hence, the mass media was forced to accommodate the ideas of the masses (Lunat, 2008). On occasions, the mass media was forced to create ideas among the public that could become part of the public sphere. This reciprocal mechanism of media depending on the public for its expansion and the public depending on the mass media as a communicative platform for rational-critical debate led to nurturing of new ideas that questioned the then existing political structures. The alternatives that were the outcome of the convergence between the masses and the mass media were revolutionary in nature and resulted in revolutionary changes during the whole of the

19<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Williams & Carpini, 2011). Many revolutionary ideas like the demands for formation of the nation states, demands for democratizing the nature of governments, and demands for universal franchise etc. ideas that question the status quo have emerged because of the convergence between the public sphere and the mass media. Though the ideas in the mass media based public sphere were created by the mass media on most of the occasions, it was also true that the public sphere also influenced the ideas of the mass media heavily. This natural collaboration between the mass media and the mass media derived public sphere have been ruling the ideas of the public sphere.

But there is significant and strong criticism against the mass media based public sphere, and the role played by the mass media in creating such a public sphere. It is argued that the ideas that the mass media has been creating can be called as mainstream ideas i.e., these are the ideas that are supported or accepted by the dominant sections in the society (Karpowitz, 2014). Though the mass media is credit with for expanding the domain of the bourgeoisie public sphere by accommodating the masses, it is argued that, in the process of creating a wider public sphere the media has created a public sphere that is tilted towards certain ideas, isms, or ways of thinking that support the expansion of the mass media. All the socio-economic and political aspects of the public sphere is argued as the derivative of what the mass media wants to project. The role of mass media in creating a mass based public sphere is undeniably true, and at the same time it is also true that the mass media did not restricts its role to acting as a platform for the public sphere. Instead, the mass media started expanding its role in influencing or controlling the public sphere. The economic side of the mass media has forced the media to look at numbers rather looking at the originality of the ideas in the public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002). The mass media that supported the original ideas of the masses in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has in fact started playing role in creating ideas from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Williams & Carpini, 2011). The mass media was forced to adopt a particular way of thinking that it thought was necessary for its survival or dominance. The intense competition among the mass media owners have led to the manipulation of the public sphere by the mass media. The two variants of mass media; print and electronic, competed with each other for space in the public sphere, and of course there was internal competition within the media formats. The mass based public sphere that was created by the media, turned to be the main source of survival for the mass media in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If a newspaper, radio, or television channel is not in a position to occupy some space in the public sphere the survival of that particular newspaper, radio or television channel becomes difficult. This forced the mass media to compete for the audience who are part of the public sphere and went on expanding the public sphere by adding new audience to it. Competing for the audience obviously means trying to convince them or make them believe that they are with the right newspaper, radio, or television channel. How can a newspaper, radio, or television convince the audience in the public sphere to stay with it? By catering to the needs of the public? By being true to the situation? How can the mass media come to the conclusion about what the audience want? How to

aggregate the opinions of the masses? How to make the masses believe in whatever the media says? In search of answers to all these questions the mass media found many answers, and has been continuously involved in the process of finding answers till date.

The methods that the mass media chose to employ to control their respective audience has a lot to do with how the public sphere has transformed, and how the socio-economic and political conditions of the society has transformed. All these changes have been artificially induced to drive the public sphere in a particular direction. So, the need for the mass media to control the public sphere it has created, has fallen on its shoulder. And the mass media handled this burden with ease.

The mass media started tuning the mass based public sphere in a particular way. The mass media as an entity has an overall interests – to control the public sphere it has created and to make sure that it acts as a base on which the survival of the mass media can be rested on, and within the mass media there existed an internal competition – competition between newspapers or television channels for the space in the public sphere. To face this competition, different newspapers or television channels used different mechanisms or presentation types to attract the audience in the public sphere. The media started structuring the news items or programs around the mainstream ideas i.e., ideas that are naturally consumed by the audience without any resistance became the hot cakes. The more the audience the more the income to a newspaper or television channel. This forced the mass media to look for popular news items or programs (Dahlgren, 1995). Different styles of presentation started emerging. News items were not restricted to just reporting, extra programs started playing important role. Manipulation, twisting, creating of new things, taking sides, demeaning or weakening the opposite ideas, creation of consent or dissent, polarizing the audience to a particular ideology or a way of living etc. have become the menu of the mass media. Commercialization of the mass media and looking at the public sphere as a potential consumer base became the facts of the day. Mass media ‘re-presentation’ started playing a crucial role in the public sphere i.e., the media no longer restrained itself from presenting the facts, instead, it re-presented whatever it wants to present to the audience in the public sphere (Chomsky & Herman, 1988). Re-presentation requires shaping the news, opinions and the ways people should be made to think of.

This process forced the media to act in a dynamic manner when it comes to catering to the audience. In the process of getting to know the pulse of the people, the mass media started different research activities on its audience to capture the thinking and response patterns of the audience. Audience are repeatedly tested for their response and the media started assessing the stand of its audience on a particular issue and the reasons behind their stand. This process led to the opinion gathering. Opinion gathering turned into an opinion creating activity after a particular stage. This stage, from where the mass media started playing the role of opinion manufacturer, is a key turning point in the transformation of the public sphere. Opinion creation has been there since the beginning of the mass media, but that happened in a default manner. But there was a particular time where the media started manufacturing the

opinion in a deliberate manner i.e., the media started created whatever the public opinion that it wanted from its audience. Noam Chomsky call this the process of “manufacturing the consent” where media tries to create the consent among the audience about a particular thing (Chomsky & Herman, 1988). The mass media started to ‘normalize’ ways of thinking which Barber calls as uniformitarian-rationality i.e., the media started to drive the audience to think in a particular way only (Barber, 2003). This process effectively made the mass media based public sphere to submit to the control of the mass media.

Once the mass media got hold of the public sphere, politics started centering on the way mass media presents or re-presents a particular news items, or issue. The mass media started to manipulate, exaggerate, exclude, cover up, create, twist, suppress the issues or facts i.e., the mass media started ‘re-presenting’ the facts. Re-presentation of issues or news takes place in many ways. Instead of just reporting the plain facts, the mass media adds, deletes, twists or manipulates the news items in order to cater to the majority of audience, or in a way to please or control a particular section. Selection or omission of a news item, space given to a particular news item, timing of the news, nature and tone of the presentation, the page number that the news is covered in, wording style, editing in or editing out proportions of the field level facts – all constitute the techniques used by the mass media in re-presenting the news items (Chomsky & Herman, 1988). The fact that the mass media got hold of the public sphere led to viewing the public sphere as a market for products, ideas, cultures and trends. All socio-economic and political advertising of the liberal ideas started taking place through mass media (Margolis & Moreno-Riano, 2009). Mass media – both print and electronic – started playing the exclusive role in driving the public sphere in the directions that it wanted it to make its journey. Hence, the shaping of ideas of the public sphere, or the public sphere itself can be said to have happened under the shadow of the mass media. The mass media played intemperate role in directing the audience of the public sphere. The mass media polarized the audience based on ideas and identities, and have been made to go hysterical about their positions. This particular situation presented the mass media with a chance to be the real controller of the strings of the political power. Political parties, governments, corporations, individuals with political or commercial goals started using mass media as a tool to promote their respective interests (Dahlgren, 1995).

This process completes the subjugation of the public sphere by the mass media. This subjugated public sphere of the mass media is promoted as a domain where ‘rational-critical’ debate takes place. This ‘rational-critical’ debate has been cited as a source of legitimacy for all government decisions. ‘Public’ opinion polls, letters to the editors, audience responding to a television reporter etc. are considered as evidence to the general ‘will’ of the people (Chomsky & Herman, 1988). The very fact that this general will of the people has been created, or the foundations for this general will has been laid down by the mass media in advance does not come to the question at all. Hence, the transformation of the public sphere, and the shifting of the audience in the public sphere in accordance with the mass media can be said to have happened in sync with the changes in the ways the communication methods are used in

the public sphere. The transformation of the audience in correspondence with the transformation of the public sphere can be said to have happened in three phases; the transformation of audience in the bourgeoisie public sphere, transformation of audience in the mass media created mass based public sphere, and transformation into uncontrollable audience based on the internet based public sphere (Livingstone, 2005). The audience in the bourgeoisie public sphere were limited in numbers, and ‘rational-critical’ debate that took place among these audience used to take place in a face-to-face manner. Different limitations like difficulties in transportation, communication methods etc. forced the audience in the public sphere to limit themselves to face-to-face interactions. Though the domain is restricted to few people only, presentation of ideas by the audience in this type of public sphere can be said to be independent of external influence. Though rudimentary forms of media like pamphlets were present in this type of public sphere, commercialization of such media was not known, hence, this particular public sphere can be said to be a domain of independent minds. The second type of audience transformation can be said to have happened in the mass media based public sphere. This public sphere is expansive in its domain as the masses got included in the public sphere, but it is heavily hooked to the ideas of the mass media. The audience in this public sphere can be said to be influenced by propaganda by the mass media and are usually reactive in nature rather than independent in their thoughts and minds. This public sphere can be said to be the highest form of subdued society so far i.e., almost all the people are part of the public sphere but all of them are controlled by *N* number of persuaders. This public sphere gives the opportune moment for the governments, mass media and other institutional structures or mainstream ideas to play around freely. The third type of audience transformation in the public sphere has been the result of internet where the audience can be said to be ‘free’ from particular types of influence. The audience in this public sphere are active, and each individual can act as an origin point for the ideas in the public sphere. The non-linear structure of the internet makes it possible for its public sphere to accommodate virtually all the ideas held by the audience. Limiting the ideas, editing in, editing out or filtering of ideas is difficult in this public sphere. Ideas occupy importance in this public sphere based on their strengths. The structural formation of the internet can be credited with for the emergence of such a discursive public sphere. A look at the structural difference between the mass media and the internet may help us understand how vibrant and discursive the internet based public sphere is vis-à-vis the mass media based public sphere.

### **Structural functional differences between mass media and internet, and the differences in their public spheres**

Changes in communication modes usually bring transformation in the nature and domain of the public sphere. The communication structures, or how communication originates, circulates, or gets interrupted or interpreted etc. factors decide how dependent or democratic its derived public sphere is. Certain modes of communication lead to shaping of dependent public sphere whereas other modes of communication may lead to taking shape of a democratic public sphere. Where do the mass media and internet stand with regard to the public spheres

they have created? Their inherent structures reveal different factors that led to the creation of two vibrant public spheres that are opposite in nature to each other in their approach to harboring the ideas of the public sphere. The mass media, with its capacity to communicate, has created a public sphere of its own, whereas the internet, with even more capacity than the mass media in terms of its communicative capacity, has been acting as a platform to the emergence of an independent, unrestrained and indefinite public sphere. Different structural limitation can be attributed with for the different public spheres that these two communication modes have created. The first and the foremost difference between these two communication structures is the space available for publication, broadcasting, dissemination or storing of information (Dahlgren, 2005). Mass media – both print and electronic formats – face limitations in terms of space and time available to publish, air, or broadcast the opinions of the public. Apparently, a ten or twenty page newspaper, or a television channel with a maximum possible 24 hour telecasting time cannot cover all the news or views of the public. Hence, it has to take the decision to edit out ‘certain’ ‘unimportant’ aspects that are circulating in the public sphere i.e., the socio-economic and political importance of the issues covered in the mass media gets decided by it (Dahlberg, 2001). The mass media chooses the thing that it want to publish or broadcast, and while selecting the views for publication it uses its own ‘rationality’ to do so. This apparently leads to the fundamental question; what type of ideas does the mass media publish? And what are the ideas that it withholds or considers ‘unworthy’ of publishing? This is the point where the mass media starts to control the public sphere, through its own judgment about the existing ideas, and through promotion or creation of its own ideas.

These ideas may sound judicious to the accustomed audience of its dependent public sphere as a result of interminable exposure to them, but an out of the box view of these ideas may make us wonder how these ideas are holding the nerve of the audience or why the audience are engaged with a particular set of ideas only. The audience in this public sphere are controlled in a systematic manner so as to make them stick to the patterned ideas that the mass media presents. Apart from the problems that the mass media faces in terms of space available to it, it also faces other functional burdens like all the transportation costs that have to be involved in covering and circulating the news, and experiencing similar strains in getting the feedback from the people in the public sphere. The costs involved in the mass media forces it to look for economies in the production and distribution of the news items (Gerhards & Schafer, 2009). This economic approach to news making, by default, forces the media to look for revenue generating information. To do this the media has to look for rudimentary interests of the public, reinforce it much strongly on them, and make it popular. Sometimes the media itself makes certain things popular. A full page report on a soccer match generates more revenue than a report on scientific exploration, or an essay on history; similarly, a live telecast of a cricket match is viewed by more audience than the parliamentary debates on the economy of the country. This is not to tell that the mass media is forcing the audience to choose certain things over other things but it shows how the mass media caters to the media-generated-tastes of the audience. Ideas are created by the mass

media and audience are made to defend these ideas. Ideas countering the ideas of the mass media are generally downplayed or dismissed as unworthy. Hence, ‘rational-critical’ debates in the mass media based public sphere can be said to be restricted to a small set of ideas only i.e., to the ideas created by the mass media in convergence with the ruling class or dominant sections. Hence, only ‘mainstream’ ideas dominate the mass media based public sphere.

Contrary to this, the internet derived public sphere provides a democratic, and indefinite communicative space to the people who use it. The space available on internet is virtually indefinite (Dahlberg, 2007). A print edition of the newspaper may have to restrict its contents to ten or twenty pages whereas an on internet, the same news agency can publish as much as it wishes to publish. This unrestrained space in terms of publishing or housing the information gives the internet the freedom to get away from the selection or editing of the news. This freedom from editing, or filtering of the news items intrinsically allows freedom for the people in the internet based public sphere to publish their ideas in an unrestrained manner. Different internet based tools like online blogs, personal URLs, video hosting sites etc. allow the audience to directly publish the contents without any restrictions from the publishers. If a content is getting published without facing any editing or filtering process then it can be certainly said that these mechanisms can be used to publish all types of ideas – including ‘unconventional’ or ‘unworthy’ ideas. This democratic nature of the internet’s non-linear communicative space apparently democratizes the public sphere it creates i.e., the contents published in it gains strength, or vanishes out based on the merit of the arguments. No one edits it out or screens it in. The internet works as a platform to host the ideas of all individuals. The internet is democratic in allowing space for publication, and this space is used by the users to publish subaltern ideas i.e., ideas that used to get filtered out in the mass media do not face such restrictions in the internet based public sphere. The internet also provides some amount of unanimity which helps the individuals to publish information or ideas opposing the present power structures. The two way mode of communication that allows the creators and consumers of information to interact with each other through e-mails, blogs, social networking, websites etc. allows the information sharing on internet to be discursive in nature. The information published in the mass media becomes static as soon as it is published. To counter the ideas published by a particular print media, ideas countering the published ideas have to be published by some other newspaper. If the counter ideas are not published the people in the public sphere will have to believe in whatever the idea that gets published in the mass media. And publishing counter ideas depends on the sole discretion of the mass media. The mass media may think that the counter ideas are not based on sufficient merit (Butsch, 2007). This judgment of the media puts an abrupt and tilted end to the ‘rational-critical’ debate that takes place in the mass media. Contrary to this, the internet provides space for all ideas to be published, and its unlimited space for publication and storing the previously published information gives the people in this public sphere to engage with a particular issue in a perpetual manner, and track back the changes whenever necessary. The speed of the flow of information in the internet based public sphere is

also faster than the speed we can see in the mass media. The visual publications on the internet allows the people to watch them at their convenience. Contrary to this, a video telecasted by a television channel has to be viewed by the audience at the time of telecasting of the program only. This restricts the reach of the program to the people in this public sphere. Hence, the mass media is concerned about the timing of publication or broadcasting of contents. These structural differences between the mass media and the internet makes the mass media based public sphere more hegemonic in nature, and the internet based public sphere more democratic in nature.

### Internet's Discursive Public Sphere

Internet facilitates direct participation of all sections of the people in the rational-critical debates of the public sphere. Internet is free from editors, free from space constraints, and is relatively free from economic burdens that the mass media faces. Individuals act as creators and consumers of the items discussed on it. Competing ideas can compete freely in the public sphere that the internet has created. The boundaries of the internet is not limited to any region or country. Ideas can freely transcend the borders without restriction in time and content. The information, or an idea that an individual creates can be posted on it without any restriction. The state mechanisms are weak in terms of their control over internet which gives the people to publish ideas that counter the position of the state (Denardis, 2014). The reach of information on the internet circulates speedily vis-à-vis to the information that gets published in the mass media. An individual who depends on the mass media for information or rational-critical debate is limited by her choices in terms of number of newspapers or television channels she can view or follow whereas on internet she gets access to an unlimited number of blogs or forums that give superior or firsthand news than the ones that gets published in the mass media. Ideas questioning the mainstream ideas, that are usually not allowed in the mass media can be published or circulated on internet with ease. Information related to the functioning of the governments, and the transparency mechanisms that the government follows etc. can be strengthened with the help of internet. Internet can host unlimited data regarding government policies, decision etc. Internet allows access to decision data that helps the people to infer or analyze the reasons behind a government's decision to take a decision in a particular direction. The space available on internet is making the governments to publish all government related data. The compulsion to publish something apparently forces the government to be more transparent in its decisions (United Nations, 2007). Internet makes the convergence among non-state actors easy by bringing together different civil society groups together (Volkmer, 2014). Similarly, it brings the people together through different platforms supported by internet. This convergence makes the state one among the important entities in controlling politics, thus taking away its exclusive role as decider of things. The state can no longer ignore the real public opinion that is there in the internet based public sphere. Internet's capacity to unite the people against the state also acts as a fundamental factor that checks the state's power (Crack, 2008). Internet allows direct presentation of ideas that was hitherto unseen in the history of communication. This direct communication apparently leads to a discursive

public sphere where all the ideas of all the people get equal chances to get published or circulated thus resulting in the success of superior ideas that wins the hearts and minds of the public. Thus, internet as a public sphere can be said to be dynamic, democratic and discursive in nature vis-à-vis the mass media based public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002).

### Summary

The non-linear structures of internet gives the internet based public sphere a far superior democratic advantage than the earlier forms of public spheres. All the rational-critical debates on internet can be said to be origination in an independent manner. Ideas go on gaining strength based on their merit. All ideas that have been suppressed so far gets circulated or discussed freely on the internet based public sphere. The structural independence of the internet makes it free from the government control and allows it to publish information that threatens the existence of the government itself. All mainstream ideas that the mass media has created have been interrogated by the subaltern ideas of the internet based public sphere. Suppression of voices in the internet based public sphere is becoming difficult for the governments or those who are in power. The state jurisdiction that is usually limited to a particular boundary has become insufficient to control the tentacles of internet. Internet put an end to the hegemonic nature of the mass media that creates a uniform rationality based ideas. The mass media that is in the hands of the ruling elite has been on decline because of the emergence of the internet as an alternative public sphere. The structural functional differences between the mass media and internet places them poles apart in terms of control on their respective domains. The mass media is controlled by factors like space, time, economic costs involved in production or circulation, censorship by the state etc. Besides these limitations, the mass media is virtually a one way mode of communication i.e., it disseminates information to the public and takes back insignificant amount of information from them. This one way mode of communication itself makes the mass media to be hegemonic in nature by default. Contrary to this, the communicative platforms provided by internet is intrinsically in two way mode i.e., creation and consumption of information is done by the people themselves, just like in Wikipedia where the contents are created and edited by the readers. The Wikipedia as a site hosts the information that is created by the public and keeps track of the changes that are made to it by different authors. This gives a democratic opportunity for the public to publish their version of issues and solutions. In the anarchy of information that the internet hosts, only those ideas that survive the rational-critical debates stays. Thus internet can be said to be providing a discursive public sphere that allows real rational-critical democratic in a democratic manner.

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