Electronic Government and Privacy

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Abstract

Privacy can be defined as areas which are peculiar to an individual not to public or society. The concept of privacy is mentioned with the concepts of confidentiality and security of personal information and private areas. While the governments create electronic tools and environment to watch and make observation to provide the citizens more secure and an environment to live, it might cause an individual's private area to shrink.

As Michael Faucault mentioned knowing means being strong and rulership keeps information to hold power. Today not only governments but also private huge corporations gather information and both of them watch citizens. As a result, individuals face social, psychological security and insecurity problems caused by these. Because of this, individuals and societies should be informed about these issues and ways to protect individual freedom.

Building of personal databases by the state and private businesses is otherizing the individual with prejudice in many fields, and causing to feel the self weak and helpless. Political alienation which may emerge as a result of this othering may deepen the representation crisis which liberal democracy is in on the contrary to the assumption that e-state would increase participation.

Key words: Electronic government, privacy,Invasion of Privacy**,** liberal democracy

Introduction

Today records of cameras, signals of mobile phones, records of phone calls through mobile phones, IP numbers of computers, e-mail tracking systems, satellite based systems, google earth applications, GPS applications are the tools that come to mind at first which can be used to violate privacy. These tools can be easily reached. When these tools are used for observation, they can constrict privacy. Some of the ethical issues that appear are as follows: Does the government open files on citizens? Do individual privacy and freedom not exist? Does watching and recording everything citizens do conform to democracy?

Though governments should develop sensitivity to such issues and regulations are needed to be done, it is not enough. In this study, as discussed in democracy theory, we propose that a strong government which is furnished with information might always cause a threat to individual freedom. In addition, contrary to liberal democracy that huge corporations threaten democracy by interfering individuals' privacy will be examined.

Electronic Government

For the services provided to citizens, it is beyond any doubt that technology has made it faster and faster, better quality, less expensive, more transparent, more equitable and more reliable. When the public administration is taken into consideration, technology has revealed a new management model by the opportunities it provides.The Internet and web technology oriented applications which brought forward this new understanding in terms of public administration have been conceptualized in different sources in different ways. For instance, Fountain (2001) used the term "virtual state" describing web and Internet based applications in public administration, some writers (Atkinson ve Ulevich, 2000; Garson, 2004; Mullen, 2004) have prefered to use the term "digital state". In addition to this, the term widely used in the literature is "electronic government". (Howard, 2001; West, 2004; Evans and Yen, 2006; OECD, 2003; Worldbank, 2008; De Benedictis et al… 2002). With reference to widespread acceptance in litearature, electronic government term has been adopted to conceptualize new management approach in public administration.

In the literature, there are many definitions developed on the understanding of electronic government. We are confronted with that some parts of these definitions are narrow sense but some parts of these are wider scoped definitions. Within these, the selected main definitions of e-government can be listed as follows: It is to serve up government information and services to citizens online through the use of the Internet and other digital tools. (West, 2004: 16)It is the use of information and communication technologies particularly the Internet in governmental issues to produce service(Howard, 2001: 6) for citizens and businesses as well. (OECD, 2003: 23). It is the use of information and communication technologies to improve public services and democratic functioning and to secure the support of public policies in public administration which is combined with organizational change and new skills.(United Nations, 2003: 7)

We understand with all these definitions in common is that a system in which all information and data are distributed with less cost by quick obtaining, the relationship of goods / services work between individuals and institutions is practised more effectively and productively with the help of online methods (Kösecik ve Karkın, 2004: 119-120), bureaucracy is reduced, the state governance has become more transparent (Erdal, 2004:1), expenditures are diminished, information and communication technologies are used for offering public services as a tool, public administration is restructured on behalf of citizens'satisfaction.

Privacy

Privacy is closely related to the concept of supervision. The concept of supervision can be discussed in two ways. While supervision, by its first definition, means the enciphered knowledge that can be used for managing human behaviours, it involves, by its second definition, of an authority to watch human behaviours directly. (Gİddens, 2008, p.24) Today, not only governments but also private sectors collect personal information. Also, private sectors conduct a supervision function as governments.

Privacy, however, generally means an area that people can stay on their own, that they can think and behave however they wish, that they themselves can decide to when, where, how, and to what extent communicate with others; and the right they have on this area (Yüksel, 2003:182). It is the dependent upon their choice that whether some human

behaviours should be confidential or open-to-public, and they should be secret to government and other people's concern.

The invasion extent of privacy is higher and more effective in the processes of e-state and the spreading of information and communication technologies. While it is a local region or a street that an individual's private information may spread through the people's sayings with the possibility to be forgotten in a short time; this kind of private information will be open to everybody living in the world; a picture, a video or a clip or a piece of writing may be duplicated many times and, in theory, maintain its existence forever in the virtual world (Tataroğlu, 2009, p:96).

Invasion of Privacy

One of the major problems of today's democracies is the representation crisis they find themselves in. The rate of participation in elections is very low in many western countries. The citizens's trust on the representative institutions of democracy and politicians is decreasing gradually. It is discussed whether the e-state, by the help of technological means, would bring solutions to the political alienation by increasing the participation in the democratic processes. Therefore, it is hoped that it will increase the support on the state and its institutions and save the future of democracy.

Information and data technologies may present a solution to the represenation crisis of democracy with its role in participation. On the other hand, it may bring many threats in terms of democracy. The activities that are carried out on an electronic spectrum can be recorded, and the personal information can be unveiled, all the activities hidden, and controllable.

The information and communication technologies, with their means to watch and to inform, may provide a great power with governments. It leads to an over centralization of the power in bureaucracy. The information technologies, today, support an organization aimed at increasing bureaucratic control mechanisms. Power may transform into a totalitarian identity when it lays a focus on a certain area. This situation brings the threat for the democratic regimes to go dead and governments to show a tendency toward repressive, totalitarian and anti-democratic works.

The term "thought police" that Laidler has drawn attention shows the possibility to know the people's political views from their activities on internet. It is not only possible to find out the political tendencies of people by detecting what sites they have visited on internet, what newspapers they have read, what books they have bought by their credit cards, but also to draw their personal profiles, and determine their illnesses, weak and strong sides. Moreover, these records may be transformed into personal data bases.

Besides, the invasion of privacy may stem not only from the states but also from private individuals or companies. In addition to the state institutions, the private institutions that communicate with people for some purposes, service and so forth, mostly make it a pre-condition, in a commanding position, for the individuals to tell both their personal information and, most importantly, credentials. It can be regarded almost impossible for people's personal information to be kept secret. It may come to mean that surfing the net or doing something on it, shopping by creadit card, paying highway fines, or even carrying a mobile phone with you, will cause your private information to be unveiled and monitored.

The employers can do some monitoring practices with the intention of decreasing the risks at workplaces. They feel obligated to examine the employers' internet use, e-mail traffic and phone calls because of some reasons such as performance evaluation, productivity measurement, and safety concerns. These practices mean the invasion of the privacy of employers' private lives.

The privacy violations of companies make it necessary to question the fundamental values of the liberal democracy. Liberalism owes its existence to free market and the individual who set him free and apart of state. Privacy in liberal thought is the field that an individual is set free or, necessarily is set free, comprehends in whatever way he wants, develops himself, and pursues his own goodness. This field must be protected from any kind of intervention.

It's not possible to mention free will, if the individual isn't able to possess field of privacy or is afraid of being followed or is exposed to different interventions. The foundations of democratic society are based on the existence of public interest in supervision of governments and the privacy right which protects the individual and common life. (Tataroğlu, 2009, S:100) In the same way, the society may cause pressure on the individual but the perception of society for liberal thinkersis evaluated within the context of beliefs, traditions and values. In this case, as the national or international companies are not accepted in state sphere, will they be accepted in the public sphere, or are they units of individual sphere which emerged as a result of free will and free enterprise.

No matter what we accept, it is true that companies intervene in individual privacy keeping a kind of "consumer tendency statistics". The market, which restrains the state from repressing the individual by balancing the state power, may also invade the area of freedom and privacy of the individual whom it protects. The free and autonomous liberal individual who can preserve itself by means of economical power it owns can intervene in other individual's privacy in order to increase the economical power once more.

The Effect of Privacy Invasion on Individuals

Privacy invasions may cause changes in individuals' psychological states and behaviours. Knowing the possibility that governments might use these technologies - even if they do not - may create effects on the thoughts and behaviours of individuals. The self-confidence of individuals who think that they are constantly under supervision begin to corrode in time. Their personalities depreciate and they may have to behave submissively and in a way that they are told to. The individual who supposes that he can always be monitored – even if they are not – develops a self-control mechanism on his own and starts overseeing himself. Individuals who know that the government owns the technologies to constantly monitor him or her begin to feel that they no longer have privacy and adopt a self-censorship application which will cause them to stay away from behaviours and thoughts that can mean opposition. Naturally, their reference of values may be the choices, ideologies, or the words and behaviours which the government or the people who monitor them will appreciate. (Tataroğlu, 2009, p:111)

The negative effects of monitoring on the employees are; demoralization, the constant rise of workloads, using the data for the purpose of punishment, stress, and the illnesses caused by stress according to Yılmaz's research which he conducted in firms. (Yılmaz, 2005:12).

Conclusion

The state of chronic fear and anxiety caused by the individual's opinion that he/she is monitored all the time may become an obstacle for the individuals to improve and express themselves. Also, a number of instances at present show that recorded personal data cannot be protected. Almost every day, it is heard that data of one of the important websites have been stolen. The governments are primarily responsible for this. Maybe, one of the most fundamental principles of legality of the state is to protect the tangible and intangible assets and honour of the individual.

The fact that e-state has the opportunity to be able to reach personal data, store it and process it by means of communication it has may promote the tendencies to abuse this power and use it for repressive and authoritarian purposes. The possibility of electronic totalitarianism should never be ignored.

To overcome the problem of invading privacy, it is necessary for the governments to show sensitivity and do the required legislation but it is not enough. The governments constitute legal regulations and enforcements in order to protect the personal data from being used by the third parties and bureaucracy for illegal purposes. However, it is clearly seen that the governments cannot fulfil their responsibilities for privacy. Therefore, efficiency of the politically neutral supervisory and regulatory institutions is required to be increased.

The common argument for the ones who think that the government's monitoring as an electronic eye is not inconvenient is that "the ones who has nothing to hide shouldn't be afraid of being watched". This is a very common statement for governing parties throughout the whole world. This approach assumes that monitoring is related to the elements which are regarded as crime by law. However, the monitoring is in progress in much more different fields including physical, financial, familial, and intellectual. Building of personal databases by the state and private businesses is otherizing the individual with prejudice in many fields, and causing to feel the self weak and helpless. Political alienation which may emerge as a result of this othering may deepen the representation crisis which liberal democracy is in on the contrary to the assumption that e-state would increase participation.

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