The Civic Awareness in the Network Society

Qing-hua DU

School of Marxism, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China

529679895@qq.com

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Abstract: Along with the initial development of the public domain in China's network, the civic awareness is awakening. The civic consciousness in the network society is more expressed as the consciousness of the common people. It is a mixture of rationality and irrationality, and is full of criticism and expectation of real life. The network provides a new platform for the development of citizen consciousness, but there are also technical dilemma, management dilemma and cultural dilemma, which impede the further development of the civic awareness. To foster the development of civic awareness in the network society, we should start from advocating communicative rationality, spreading participatory political culture and rationally regulating cyberspace.

Introduction

The network provides individuals with the opportunity to transcend different social backgrounds and affiliations to truly express themselves, and promotes the development of public discussion on line and the awakening of civic awareness. The so-called civic awareness in the network society refers to the feelings and cognition of the netizens on their status in the political life of the country. On the one hand, the development of civic awareness provides a window for the authority to understand public opinion. On the other hand, the phenomenon of "group polarization", network infringement and even "cyber violence" appear in the process of network expression, let people cannot but worry about it. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a thorough and detailed study of the civic awareness in the network.

The characteristics of the Civic Awareness in the Network Society

As the network provides a new platform different from the real environment, the civic awareness in the network society has its own characteristics in its form of expression.

1. From the point of view of the participation group, the civic awareness in the network society is more representative of the consciousness of the civilian population.

According to the forty-first China Internet development statistics report provided by CNNIC, as of December 2017, the number of Internet users in China reached 772 million, and the popularity rate reached 55.8%. The civilian has become the main force of Chinese netizens. As a new mode of communication, network has changed the pattern of information dissemination by elites. It also has changed the situation in which the civilian population lacks the normalization mechanism for political participation in real life. In a certain sense, it can be said that civic awareness in the network is more expressed as the consciousness of the common people.

2. From the way of expression, the civic awareness in the network society is a mixture of rationality and irrationality.

Due to the lack of authority review mechanism, the process of network narration itself is embodied as randomness and diversity. With the controversy on the network society, radical words appear from time to time. Interestingly, some netizens are smart and rational when making some voices, and are rough and impulsive when making other voices. This shows that the civic awareness is not naturally connected to reason, sometimes the sound of reason is even annihilated by an irrational whirlwind.

3. From the topic of concern, the civic awareness in the network society is full of criticism and expectation of real life.
The prevalence of Internet electronic mail services, electronic bulletin boards, online chat and web blog support users anonymously involved, making the public to participate in the public discussion of hitherto unknown, and through their own words to change their own networks and communities of different position and different levels of public decision-making, the implementation of change policies and laws that are not reasonable in real life [1]. From the theme of concern, most of them are important events concerning social system, law and ethics. In the network society, netizen judge, reflect and debate these public events, and urge the person or organization involved in the event to take appropriate measures.

The dilemma of the development of Civic Awareness in the Network Society

While promoting the development of civic awareness, the network society also has factors that hinder the development of the civic awareness. In general, the dilemma of the development of civic awareness in the network society can be summarized as follows.

1. Technical dilemma: the existence of the "digital divide"

Theoretically speaking, network is open to all. However, due to many factors, there is inevitably a "digital gap" among different groups of people in using and not using the Internet and in the depth of using the Internet. Pippa Norris summarized the “digital divide” in three forms: the global divide, the social divide, and the democratic divide [2]. The ability of different groups to make discourse in the public domain of the network is quite different. Some groups may not be able to use the network to make their own voices. The existence of "digital divide" has become an insurmountable obstacle to the cultivation of civic awareness in the network society.

2. Cultural dilemma: the popularity of mass culture

American scholar Macdonald said: "mass culture is sometimes called" pop culture ", but I think" mass culture "is a more accurate concept, because like gum, its special sign is just a product for mass consumption [3]. Popular culture is a commercial culture in terms of its nature, and consumerism and enjoyment are its main features. Online media has clearly shifted to mass culture. People's attention on the Internet is often not about the topic of public interest, but more about attracting love, funny and gossip entertainment information. This situation is obviously not conducive to the further development of civic awareness in the network society.

3. Management dilemma: the lack of effective network regulation

The freedom of the cyberspace has caused disorganized problems. People are eagerly looking forward to the effective regulation of the network. The basic way of regulation of people's behavior is the interaction of law, social norm, market and technology. China is one of the few countries with independent laws to control online speech. However, most of the existing legislation belongs to administrative regulations and there are duplications or vacancies in content, and most of them are specified in terms of systems that are convenient for government administration. In addition, existing social norms, markets, and technologies have relatively weak regulatory effects. The lack of effective network regulation makes people have to identify the authenticity, legitimacy and rationality of online remarks based on their personal experience, so that the healthy development of citizens’ civic awareness in the network society is greatly constrained.

The cultivation strategy of Civic Awareness in the Network Society

In order to promote the healthy development of civic awareness in the network society, the following cultivation strategies can be adopted:

1. Advocate communicative rationality

China is still in a period of social transformation. Conflicts between classes and the disparity between the rich and the poor have caused some people to be psychologically unbalanced. As a result, some netizens tend to oppose and condemn without even thinking, and even tend to “group polarize”. At present, the biggest obstacle that hinders the development of our civic awareness in the network society is the lack of rational spirit. “Ration is reflected in the fact that educated people use
the intellectual and rational communication process together. Because any kind of ruling relationship poses a threat to it, it itself also needs protection to prevent superficiality” [4]. Accurately speaking, cyberspace needs communicative rationality, which is the psychological tendency and behavioral orientation of different subjects to achieve mutually beneficial development through communication and dialogue. To promote and guarantee the healthy development of civic awareness in the network society, communication rationality must be actively advocated.

2. Spread participatory political culture

Participatory political culture is the concept proposed by American scholars Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963 [5], and has become widely used as an important concept of political science. It refers to the social members’ strong, clear cognition, emotion and value orientation towards the political system as a whole, and has a positive understanding and a high evaluation of their rights, abilities and responsibilities as members of the society. The government should guide the public to engage in orderly political participation in real life, and strengthen communication between the government and the masses. It may be the most effective way to spread participatory political culture.

3. Reasonably regulate cyberspace

The government’s legal approach should be the most powerful way to regulate the network society. Chinese President Xi Jinping has pointed out that "to build a good ecological network, we should give full play to the role of the Internet in guiding public opinion and reflecting public opinion". The government should balance the legal regulation of the network and the freedom of expression of individual speech, under the premise of ensuring the freedom of speech and expression of citizens. The legislature can formulate more effective laws on the basis of the implementation of the existing laws. It is necessary to ensure that citizens can express their ideas and ideas freely through the Internet, as well as conduct corresponding legal responsibilities for those behaviors that are harmful to society, such as slander others.

The Internet provides the most open platform for the expression of civic awareness in the network society. As the most participatory means of mass communication, it should be supported by reasonable policies and systems. What the government needs to do is to encourage the benign interaction of the society through a free and open media, and further expand the channels for citizens’ political participation in real life. Thus, China’s goal of a harmonious society will be gradually approaching.

Reference


