

# Digital Media: A Double-Edged Sword for Representative Democracy\*

Gillian Wong Miswardi

**Abstract:** In recent years, various forms of digital media have gained importance in both the private and public spheres. While digital media were central to the uprisings in the Arab world, other countries restricted social media usage as a response to these events. Thus, there is reason to believe that the future of democracy is uncertain. Focusing on the fundamental principles of democracy, this essay analyses the relationship between digital media and democracy, arguing that democracy must respond to both the changing nature of politics and the challenges posed by this new form of communication.

---

*\*This is the winning essay in International IDEA's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Essay Competition.*

## Introduction

In an interview with Google's Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen on the relationship between technology and democracy, former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice remarked that 'democracy is always right at the edge of chaos' (Freedman 2014). Indeed, Rice highlighted one of the conundrums that scholars of politics and communication studies have been examining about digital media and the Internet more generally: if the Internet affords everyone the chance to say whatever they want, then how do we make sense of everything that is out there? While traditional media such as newspapers, television and radio give a small number of people the opportunity to speak to millions, millions now have the opportunity to say whatever they want through digital media. As with all communications technologies, the advent of the Internet and new media has given rise to a multitude of problems and issues. The link between technology and democracy has been a precarious one, and the recent uprisings that were spurred on by the use of digital media tools such as Twitter and Facebook have compelled scholars to rethink the relationship between technology and democracy. While the Arab Spring demonstrated the power of the Internet to unite people to overthrow regimes, the consequences of the uprisings today compel us to evaluate the real potential of the Internet and digital media in advancing democracy around the world.

Beyond just the unfolding of events in the Arab world, the question of representative democracy's future in the digital age encourages us to evaluate democracy itself. Why are we so concerned about the future of democracy? Michael Mandelbaum, in his book *The Ideas that Conquered the World* (2001), observed that economic development and democracy bore a strong correlation, particularly in the post-Cold War world. Increasing per capita incomes go hand in hand with increasing acceptance and implementation of democratic principles. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that people should want to advance a political project that could improve the lives of millions. At the same time, political scientists have observed an erosion of Western democracies, where politics is no longer debated along party lines and where electoral turnouts continue to wane (Mair 2009). Thus, in this time of political change, even without considering the

arrival of new communications technologies, the democratic project appears to be facing problems of its own. These two observations—about the potential of democracies to improve economic well-being and the changing nature of established democracies—form some of the basis of my inquiry into the future of democracy.

Why do we feel threatened or supported by the development of web technologies? These questions suggest that there is far more than just the usual ‘liberating’ reason that scholars argued in light of the Arab Spring. What we have is an opportunity to understand the principles and foundations that democracy has been built on and the effects of digital media on these foundations. This is the route that my analysis will take: only when we closely scrutinize the foundations of representative democracy can we truly see the influence of digital media. Indeed, the concept of democracy deserves more than just a simple definition. To reach an understanding of what democracy really means, we should first examine democratic principles. I argue that digital media have had mixed effects on representative democracy, and thus for the democratic project to advance, we must, in the words of Evgeny Morozov, make the Internet an ally.

## **Deliberation**

While we are presented with the opportunity to formulate our own conception of democracy, there are some principles that have consistently emerged in works on democracy (Przeworski 1999; Schumpeter 1994). Thus, my analysis begins with consideration of the idea of democratic deliberation. Following from Weber and Schumpeter’s theories on democracy, this idea concerns the principles of equality, active participation and self-determination (Saffon and Urbinati 2013; Schumpeter 1994). More specifically, democracy relies on the premise that people have a choice to determine their future through a system of voting. How they come to a decision on what that future should look like is the focus of this section on democratic deliberation and how these principles are manifested. The deliberative aspect of democracy aligns closely with the idea of the ‘public sphere’, where people can debate and deliberate over matters that concern them.

Thus, to understand the workings of a deliberative democratic process, we must attend to this concept of the ‘public sphere’. Jürgen Habermas’s concept of the ‘public sphere’, despite having been variously critiqued, provides a starting point for us to consider the effects of digital media:

*By ‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest. In a large public body this kind of communication requires specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. Today newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere. We speak of the political public sphere in contrast, for instance, to the literary one, when public discussion deals with objects connected to the activity of the state. Although state authority is so to speak the executor of the political public sphere, it is not a part of it. (Habermas, Lennox and Lennox 1974: 49)*

Thus, the principles of equality and active participation in a democracy are similarly present in the Habermasian ‘public sphere’. By allowing everyone to be able to speak and to encourage political debate, proponents of democracy argue that this allows citizens to understand the issues that concern them and the people who wish to resolve such issues. Moreover, Mandelbaum notes that politically engaged citizens were more aware of policies that would suppress them, further encouraging the development of democracy (2002: 257). Where do digital media come in then? In this sense, if we were to replace the Habermasian media of newspapers and television with the social media tools of Facebook and Twitter, then we might understand how democracy could be influenced by these new forms of media.

One of the features of a democracy is its claim to ensure equality in many forms, such as in the equal vote between individuals and the equal opportunity for discussion. The latter is

prominent in democratic deliberation. In terms of digital media, even more access is granted to the public sphere. Even though the notion of the digital age has been most strongly associated with social media technologies such as Facebook, a 2003 survey of new media showed the growing influence of the Internet on represented peoples. A yougov.com poll of UK citizens showed that 44 per cent of respondents would choose the Internet as their primary source of information, with 54 per cent of 18-24-year-olds choosing this option (Coleman and Spiller 2003: 7). As such, websites from the government and various organizations are crucial in broadening access to the realm of traditional politics. Information on the voting patterns, speeches and opinions of elected representatives are available for anyone to access and evaluate nowadays.

Even though advocates of an age of digital democracy may argue that the use of digital media increases access to political debate, we must not forget that there are many constituents who are offline. Access to digital media tools is constrained by a multitude of social and cultural factors, giving rise to what is now known as the 'digital divide' (Gorski 2003). Politicians who were fervent advocates of digital media and optimists regarding its potential neglected to account for this difference in access (Nilsson and Carlsson 2014: 667). Others who were more aware of the need for face-to-face communication did not overlook this aspect (Coleman and Spiller 2003: 7). Putting aside the assumption that all constituents had equal access to the information on the Internet further emphasised the idea that politics was about meeting real people, in person.

The opportunity for freedom of expression on the Internet also allows for greater participation in politics. Although traditional media once limited articles to those who worked in television, newspaper and radio, the Internet now offers the opportunity for user-created content. Political interest groups may take the form of discussion boards, blogs, and well-known social networking websites. Similarly, Dahlberg notes cases of more organized democratic discussion projects such as the Minnesota E-democracy initiative and the Hansard Society's e-democracy forum (2011: 869). As he points out, these projects are of varying quality, with some involving more discussion on democracy than others. Together, these websites encourage the notion of

equality in democracy. No longer is the realm of politics just limited to formal debates on television or in newspapers. Instead, individuals may partake in the democratic project on their own and contribute to the understanding of democracy in society. The increased freedom of expression leads to a levelling of individuals in society through the proliferation of opportunities to engage in the public sphere and debate issues. Nevertheless, this freedom of expression is not a given.

Another way that digital media allow for democratic deliberation is in their ability to provide freedom of (digital) assembly. Instead of a physical space, the web transcends geographical boundaries to offer a space where communities congregate to discuss issues that concern them. However, these issues do not stop at mere ideas. More than just thoughts, the Internet allows groups to form and activists to assemble, and this is especially important for groups that were previously isolated or had little contact with one another (Dahlberg 2011: 860). The deliberative nature of digital media is transformed into something that takes action as a response to online discussion. Although this action has most recently been associated with institutionally subversive movements such as Occupy Wall Street, early adoptees of this feature of digital media have demonstrated its potential in promoting democratic ideals. One such social movement was the Zapatista movement in Mexico, which was noted for its significant use of digital media in the early days of the Internet. In January 1994, the Zapatista National Liberation Army mobilized numerous activists and organizations by using the Internet to draw attention to their cause (Rodríguez, Ferron and Shamas 2014: 155; Ronfeldt and Arroyo Center 1998). The movement was encouraged by the actions of a graduate student who, while doing fieldwork in Mexico, assisted the Zapatistas by distributing information and material about them via Internet bulletin boards. For many analysts, the immense attention that the Zapatista movement gathered was the result of then-revolutionary and unexpected uses of a fledgling communications technology. More than 20 years on from the Zapatista movement, digital media and the Internet have proven many times that they are immensely useful tools for group organization. This aspect of deliberative democracy is strengthened through these practices.

## Power

The development of digital media has shown great potential in advancing democracy. In comparison with traditional media such as newspapers and television, digital media offer an opportunity to expand the public sphere. This optimistic view of digital media portrays them as tools to expand the political conversation beyond that of the elite (Mazzoleni 2015: 174). While citizens used to depend on journalists to express their views on political life through traditional media, citizens can now further the political conversation through user-created blogs and content. In this way, digital media have rendered public life more equal by giving everyone a voice. As the top-down flow of political communication is modified, we are also increasingly witnessing the emergence of a 'digital polity' (Mazzoleni 2015: 179). Instead of a relationship between representatives and citizens that is moderated by the media, digital media bypass the intermediary, journalists, to connect citizens directly to their representatives. Without the moderation of political communication, the field of discussion is greatly expanded and levelled. Citizens are able to directly influence representatives, and vice versa. No longer restricted to a sampling of voices on the ground, representatives are faced with a plurality of views.

In some ways, the problem with a plurality of views in a representative democracy concerns knowing what matters to the electorate. Since citizens are able to communicate directly with their representatives, they do not have to choose what matters most to them. Instead, platforms such as Twitter allow individuals to easily inform their representatives about anything and everything in their constituency. On the one hand, representatives are made aware of issues that they may not have been aware of previously. In the case of marginalized communities such as the Zapatistas in Mexico, digital media allow them to convey their situation to their representatives more easily than traditional media or institutional procedures. On the other hand, representatives face the problem of preference aggregation. Although preference aggregation has been used with regard to the voting process, it is similarly an issue with regard to representatives' policies for their communities.

Representatives may base their proposed policies or solutions on what they perceive as the desires of their electorate. In the case of a range of opinions, they may find it more difficult to understand the issues that matter most to their constituents.

If we were to go by market logic, then having a plurality of views would not be a problem. This logic supposes that the areas of greatest need would have the loudest voice, or in the sense of Twitter, the most tweets. Conversely, areas that are important but of a less immediate need are drowned out. Politics then becomes a game whose result is determined by the economic principles of supply and demand. While this approach to digital media communication is easy to justify, the logic of the market assumes that power is equal among all citizens. Indeed, it is often those who are most disenfranchised or excluded from the conversation that need the most attention. Thus, while journalists and politicians alike may use data tools like sentiment analysis on Twitter, they must not forget that unequal power does not disappear in an online community (Mazzoleni 2015: 180). Certain voices are louder than others. The role of the elected representative then is not to adopt one voter analysis strategy over another. Instead, the representative must be able to balance even more finely on the line between typical statistical analysis and one's perception of community sentiment. This challenge is caused by the preponderance of digital communications technologies, which, while strengthening democratic values of equality and active participation, demand even more of future representatives.

In addition to the preference aggregation problems posed by the flourishing of digital platforms, the increased ease of communication has also had implications for the form of political communication. The instant nature of digital media places greater expectations on representatives. Although the features of Twitter in this regard need no mentioning, e-mail has also played a significant role in the acceleration of political communications. In 2003, Coleman and Spiller noted that the use of e-mail created greater expectations for British members of parliament (MPs) (2003: 7). One interviewed MP stated that e-mail senders expected a response, some to the point of demanding a response. Hence, some of the MPs that were interviewed created separate e-mail

addresses for different groups of people. Others decided not to respond to people outside of their constituency. Coleman and Spiller's interviews suggest that digital media bring representatives and their constituents closer together, which also means that representatives are tasked with dealing with more issues, possibly increasing the bureaucratic aspects of politics.

Communication with citizens is a central aspect of democracy, and even more so for representative democracies. In a representative democracy, candidates aim to demonstrate their ability to reflect the needs of their constituents. To do so in the digital age, it is almost expected that candidates will have a website to express their views. Despite the increasing reliance on the Internet by both candidates and voters to campaign and to gather information, respectively, digital media are still seen as an inadequate substitute for traditional political campaigning—with an emphasis on face-to-face communication. All of the politicians that Coleman and Spiller interviewed stressed the importance of this form of communication despite the benefits of the Internet (2003: 7). Their responses indicated the insufficiency of digital media in helping politicians understand their constituency. As I have described previously, part of their argument for engaging in face-to-face communications was an understanding that digital media and the Internet were not inclusive, especially for older voters. Thus, while an online presence was very important, it could not take the place of other campaigning methods.

Just as representatives believed that the Internet was a barrier to helping them to understand their constituents, they also believed that digital media prevented voters from understanding them. Their online political identity was another image that they had to manage. Although one would expect politicians' social media identities to form just one part of their entire political identity, some scholars have pointed out that online identities are changing the state of politics as well. In Sweden, politicians in Västerbotten expressed concern over the purported benefits of Facebook and Twitter (Nilsson and Carlsson 2014). This concern stemmed from an opinion that authenticity and political ideas were being sidelined in favour of populist attention-seeking practices on these social media websites. Just like the interviewed British MPs, Swedish

politicians emphasized the artificial nature of websites. Politics for them was defined by meeting voters in person. While having an online presence was crucial to politicians, an over-reliance on digital media tools could portray them as being less serious. Politicians could not be seen to be focused on superficial online brand management and instead had to demonstrate that they had political substance. The words of these Swedish politicians highlight one aspect of digital media that was also apparent in traditional media. While political substance was important, their success in elections was based on a fine balance between developing an authentic self and portraying oneself in a way to garner votes. This aspect has similarly been raised with regard to television appearances and speeches, and the growing importance of digital media merely signals that politicians need to manage this other aspect of their identity.

Since political imagery on the Internet has become a larger part of democracies today, issues of authenticity have also led to questions about trust in representatives. As Dahlgren illustrates, the issue of trust within a democracy is paradoxical (2009: 113). If there is too much trust, potential problems may go unnoticed; too little trust, on the other hand, and democracy is unable to function. Thus, an optimal level of trust is necessary. What is the significance of digital media with regard to this issue? I would argue that digital media add an additional dimension for citizens to evaluate their representatives. Though this could push the level of trust in either direction, digital media have proven to be extremely useful in holding politicians accountable. In this sense, digital media function as a 'fifth estate' (Dutton 2015: 170). One of the most notable examples of this was the release of materials on WikiLeaks, which has raised questions concerning actions taken by the United States government (Pieterse 2012: 1912). Moreover, the disclosures have highlighted the extent to which institutions were democratic or were otherwise undermining democracy. On a more fundamental level, the proliferation of information over the Internet enables citizens to play a role in the system of checks and balances with respect to their representatives. This ensures that politicians act, or at least try to act, in the interests of their citizens and for the benefit of their community as a whole.

In addition to functioning as a system of checks and balances, digital media offer a platform for a viable opposition within representative democracy. The presence of a substantial opposition is crucial for democracy, as democracy could fall into authoritarianism without an opposition. Przeworski argues for the importance of opposition parties within parliamentary democracies in ensuring democracy's survival (1999: 50). Without them, he notes, a political system with one party dominating more than two-thirds of the parliament could indicate a slow march towards the collapse of democracy. Digital media can play a potentially powerful role in preventing this from occurring. Opposition representatives could deploy digital media tools in creative ways to garner support for their party, especially among more avid users of the Internet. Thus, opposition parties could gain in significance, and representative democracy would be strengthened as a result. However, a similar argument could also be used for dominant ruling individuals or parties. The same social media websites could be used to reinforce or garner more support for those already in power and to shape public perceptions. Therefore, the ability of digital media to tip the balance in favour of or against democracy is highly variable. There are several other factors that determine the online content that people consume or that is made most visible to users.

As some scholars have argued, the influence of digital media depends largely on control of the Internet. Even if opposition candidates were adept at using social media and the Internet, their usage would still be constrained by any authoritative control of the Internet. A number of scholars have addressed this point, especially in light of government responses to the Arab Spring uprisings and the supposed Iranian Twitter revolution of 2009. Morozov (2011) writes that while he initially believed in the immense potential of online communities to push for democratic reform, the ability of governments around the world to regulate Internet content proved that the Internet was more than just a liberating force. Moreover, in undemocratic countries with citizens seeking democratic reform, such as in China, Internet restrictions make the work of democratic activists increasingly difficult. Such governments have also caught on to the potential of using the Internet for their own benefit, in other words, using digital media tools to maintain the status quo (MacKinnon

2011: 44). Thus, the usage of digital media is restricted by existing Internet regulations. These regulations are one of factors influencing what citizens can view online.

Even in existing democracies, the capacity of digital media to provide a voice for the opposition or alternative points of view is affected by commercial interests. In his analysis of political blogs, Richard Davis argues that digital media are increasingly adopting many of the characteristics of traditional media (2009: 193). More specifically, he points to the emergence of blogs on established media websites alongside articles by professional journalists. Although blogging was previously viewed as a separate domain from traditional news reporting, websites such as the Huffington Post have integrated the two. Most crucially, like traditional media, not all bloggers are read equally. In fact, Davis notes that the most prominent political bloggers are those who preserve the status quo, as they do not represent alternative voices (2009: 40). Although people may turn to newspapers' websites for news and to blogs for alternative content, the convergence of these two forms suggests that commercial interests may play a larger role in determining whose voice gets heard. Media conglomerates are able to invest more money in promoting their sites, just as they did with traditional media. Thus, alternative voices even within existing democracies are strongly influenced by market economics.

## **Structure**

Thus far, digital media have proven to be a double-edged sword. As a means of entering the public sphere and engaging in political conversation, digital media demonstrate an ability to support representative democracy. On the contrary, scholars have pointed out the non-neutral nature of the web, with its access monitored and regulated by the government in both democratic and non-democratic arenas. In this final section, I explore the foundations of democratic elections and the impact of digital media. For a democracy to last, citizens must place their trust in its processes and structure.

Przeworski's minimalist conception of democracy defends Joseph Schumpeter's view that democracy is nothing more than a method for choosing the best leaders (1999). For a democracy to last, voters must accept the outcome of the electoral process even if they disagree with those who are elected. According to Przeworski, this is due to two factors. First, the losers are aware that any attempt to subvert the democratic process would be risky, as the majority is against them. Second, the democratic process makes it possible for the losers to win in a subsequent election. Hence, Schumpeter's democracy is one that is governed by adherence to rules that, if followed, benefit the electorate.

With the advent of digital media, citizens are now able to express their opinions regarding election results. Particularly in countries where citizens are pushing for democratic reform in place of existing governmental structures, digital media offer a valuable insight into the state of democracy in those countries. Moreover, these countries are often places where foreign traditional media and journalists have been severely restricted from entering. Social media in particular, then, offer citizens a gateway into the wider world. This was most notably demonstrated in the aftermath of the 2009 Iranian presidential elections, which were hailed by some as the 'Twitter revolution'. The social media platform was so integral to the planning of the protests that the US State Department asked Twitter to delay its routine maintenance (Hermida 2010: 297). Moreover, protestors were able to buy CDs preloaded with software to circumvent Internet censorship, which allowed them to upload images onto social media platforms (Coleman 2010: 493). These uses of digital media show the increasing importance of such technologies in the pursuit of democracy across the world.

In democratizing states, digital media have proven to be extremely beneficial for the democracy project. Social media platforms can be used to communicate to the wider world about the extent to which elections are free, fair and democratic. As in the case of Iran, such reports could culminate in protests to demand free and fair elections, the first step towards democracy. Indeed, this would help in promoting and advancing democracy.

If citizens took similar actions to protest the results of democratic elections, however, this would not bode well for the state of democracy. Although this has not been an issue in major democracies worldwide, the ease of organizing protests over the Internet could aid such actions. In such a situation, what the protestors would be protesting against would be the election result, and not the election process. If we were to follow Schumpeter and Przeworski's analysis of democracy, then this would appear to be rather far-fetched. Protestors would face an uphill battle against those who voted representatives into power, indicating that those representatives had at least some support among their constituents. However, I contend that the current state of politics and democracy could lead to these actions. Established democracies are witnessing a decline in voter turnout, a greater sense of disenchantment with politics, and falling party numbers (Mair 2009).

According to Peter Mair, the failure of political parties to engage with citizens is the cause of the current state of democracy in the Western world. Although Mair's analysis focuses on direct democracy rather than representative democracy, similar statements have been made in the context of representative democracies. In Norway, scholars have noted the erosion of representative government (Østerud 2005; Selle and Østerud 2006). Instead of political parties, Norwegian politics is dominated by short-term political groups with a focus on more pressing concerns (Selle and Østerud 2006: 551). Similarly, Mair states that citizens rely more on specialized methods of representation, such as political action groups. Non-political groups such as the United Nations are also able to represent citizens and make decisions on their behalf. Together with the failure of parties to engage with citizens, representative democracy is witnessing a serious change.

This changing state of politics in democratic countries is at odds with some of the assumptions of democracy. Democracy relies on uncertainty in elections, respect for the law and hope for the future (Przeworski 1999). What we are witnessing is the disappearance of the last aspect. As hope disappears, many ponder the future of democracy. The state of politics today features a disengagement from traditional politics that fuels, and is strengthened by, a loss of faith

in the future. This is where digital media can tip the balance away from democracy. As with the protests in Iran, disenchanted individuals may likewise use the organizational capabilities of the Internet to protest against what they feel is a failure of politics. Politics has become increasingly stale, and the recent economic crisis did nothing to alleviate this situation. For instance, Postill predicts a future in which technology and democracy become even more entwined, in what he calls an 'age of viral reality' (2014: 53). His prediction was based on the peaceful Spanish protests of 15 May 2011, which were facilitated by various social media tools. The protests started when a small group of people assembled at Madrid's Puerta del Sol to express their discontent at the Spanish government's handling of the crisis and the poor state of the Spanish economy. They were joined by others who followed their call on Twitter and these protests quickly gained traction in other cities. Thus, while Twitter and other social media platforms are emphasized in analyses of political movements, there also appears to be a worrying trend away from the party politics that we are familiar with. In particularly media-rich countries such as Spain, Postill sees the possibility of viral media transcending established representative democracy. When people believe that the current form of democracy is no longer capable of delivering a better future, they use protests to express what they want. Digital media assists this more focused and more direct form of politics by circumventing established democratic structures.

Democracy is dependent on the trust of citizens in its processes and structure. As shown by the 2009 Iranian protests, digital media affords people the opportunity to report on the state of democracy. However, the established democracies are also witnessing a shift in politics, in which democracy no longer appears to represent hope for a better world to come. Digital media aids the democratization process yet it may also encourage activities that disrupt democratic systems.

## **Conclusion**

What are we to make of the future of representative democracy? For one, it is clear that the trajectory of representative democracy is not based solely on the development of the Internet

and digital media platforms. To understand the possible future of representative democracy requires an examination of existing concerns and issues in politics. Digital media interact with the foundations of representative democracy in ways that both support and challenge the very idea of democracy. On the one hand, they have brought people closer together by transcending geographical boundaries. The development of new online communities has prompted some scholars to understand them in the vein of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities', a term that was once used to explain the rise of nationalism (Lutz and du Toit 2014). Yet, at the same time, digital media have promoted the growth of individual, atomized expressions, which brings about a whole array of possibilities. Together with the changing state of democratic politics, the future of representative democracy may look uncertain.

In my analysis, I have focused on some of the fundamental principles and defining characteristics of representative democracy, demonstrating that digital media have had multifarious effects. It seems that there may be a need to evaluate what we understand about representative democracy. As the Internet and various forms of digital media grow in importance in our lives, supporters of representative democracy must adapt to the importance of these new media. Instead of feeling threatened by the prospects of a digital age, proponents of representative democracy should find ways in which the Internet can serve a purpose. The increasing disillusionment with traditional politics is where this understanding is most needed, and where digital media should be directed to support democracy.

As John Bercow, the Speaker of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, said in a speech at the Australian Parliament, 'Democracy is a flexible creature' (Bercow 2014). Representative democracy must take digital media into consideration; otherwise, it risks being left behind. This is no easy task, but if we intend to improve the lives of people around the world, then it is a goal that we must pursue.

## References

- Bercow, John, 'Representative democracy in a digital age: Fact or fiction?', 2014, available at <<http://www.parliament.uk/business/commons/the-speaker/speeches/speeches/representative-democracy-in-a-digital-age>>, accessed 22 April 2015
- Coleman, E. Gabriella, 'Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39 (2010), pp. 487–505
- Coleman, Stephen, and Spiller, Josephine, 'Exploring New Media Effects on Representative Democracy', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 9/3 (2003), pp. 1–16
- Dahlberg, Lincoln, 'Re-constructing digital democracy: An outline of four "positions"', *New Media & Society*, 13/6 (2011), pp. 855–72
- Dahlgren, Peter, *Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication, and Democracy* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- Davis, Richard, *Typing Politics: The Role of Blogs in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Dutton, William H, 'The Internet's Gift to Democratic Governance', in Stephen Coleman, Giles Moss and Katy Parry (eds.), *Can the Media Serve Democracy?* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 164–73, available at <<http://www.palgraveconnect.com/doi/10.1057/9781137467928>>
- Freedman, Michael, 'What Is the Relationship Between Technology and Democracy?', Stanford Graduate School of Business, 2014, available at <<http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/what-relationship-between-technology-democracy>>, accessed 22 April 2015
- Gorski, Paul C., 'Privilege and Repression in the Digital Era: Rethinking the Sociopolitics of the Digital Divide', *Race, Gender & Class*, 10/4 (2003), pp. 145–76
- Habermas, Jürgen, Lennox, Sara and Lennox, Frank, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)', *New German Critique*, 3 (1974), pp. 49–55
- Hermida, Alfred, 'Twittering the News', *Journalism Practice*, 4/3 (2010), pp. 297–308
- Lutz, Barend, and du Toit, Pierre, *Defining Democracy in a Digital Age: Political Support on Social Media* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)
- MacKinnon, Rebecca, 'China's "Networked Authoritarianism"', *Journal of Democracy*, 22/2 (2011), pp. 32–46.
- Mair, Peter, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy* (London: Verso, 2009)
- Mandelbaum, Michael, *The Ideas That Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy, and Free Markets in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002)

- Mazzoleni, Gianpietro, 'Towards an Inclusive Digital Public Sphere', in Stephen Coleman, Giles Moss and Katy Parry (eds.), *Can the Media Serve Democracy?* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 174–83, available at <<http://www.palgraveconnect.com/doi/10.1057/9781137467928>>
- Morozov, Evgeny, *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World* (London: Allen Lane, 2011)
- Nilsson, Bo and Carlsson, Eric, 'Swedish Politicians and New Media: Democracy, Identity and Populism in a Digital Discourse', *New Media & Society*, 16/4 (2014), pp. 655–71.
- Østerud, Øyvind, 'Introduction: The Peculiarities of Norway', *West European Politics*, 28/4 (2005), pp. 705–20
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen, 'Leaking Superpower: WikiLeaks and the Contradictions of Democracy', *Third World Quarterly*, 33/10 (2012), pp. 1909–24
- Postill, John, 'Democracy in an Age of Viral Reality: A Media Epidemiography of Spain's Indignados Movement', *Ethnography*, 15/1 (2014), pp. 51–69
- Przeworski, Adam, 'Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense', in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón (eds.), *Democracy's Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 23–55
- Rodríguez, Clemencia, Ferron, Benjamin and Shamas, Kristin, 'Four Challenges in the Field of Alternative, Radical and Citizens' Media Research', *Media, Culture & Society*, 36/2 (2014), pp. 150–66
- Ronfeldt, David F. and Arroyo Center, *The Zapatista 'Social Netwar' in Mexico* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1998)
- Saffon, Maria Paula and Urbinati, Nadia, 'Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty', *Political Theory*, 41/3 (2013), pp. 441–81
- Schumpeter, Joseph A., *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Selle, Per and Østerud, Øyvind, 'The Eroding of Representative Democracy in Norway', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13/4 (2006), pp. 551–68