

THE PROMISE OF E-DEMOCRACY

Why the Internet May Challenge Politics

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Abstract

Recently the impressive growth of the Web, and the Internet in general, has been considered as a promise that may both challenge and boost our representation of democratic institutions. It is well known that modern democracies are based on the possibility to control and even replace who rules by the force of the best arguments. More generally, the control of the government, and the effectiveness of democracy, is possible, if the citizens can access information. Hence, the promise of the Internet mainly relies on the fact that people may more freely access information, because it seems it cannot be controlled or manipulated by the political power.

In the first part of this outline we will depict a cognitive framework to deal with the relationships between Internet and democracy. We shall show that Internet, as an information technology, can be considered as a *cognitive* and *moral mediator*; it can provide stories, texts, images, combined with sounds, so that the information fosters not only a cognitive, but also an emotional and moral understanding. In this sense, the Internet represents a kind of redistribution of the moral effort through managing objects and information to overcome the poverty and the unsatisfactory character of the options available.

In the last part we will illustrate that Internet, as a moral mediator, may enhance democracy in two respects. First, it affords civic engagement and participation; second, it allows people to face different sources of information so that almost everyone can verify and test the information delivered by traditional media.