



Connecting Democracy: Online Consultation and the Flow of Political Communication

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The global explosion of online activity is steadily transforming the relationship between government and the public. The first wave of change, "e-government," enlisted the Internet to improve management and the delivery of services. More recently, "e-democracy" has aimed to enhance democracy itself using digital information and communication technology. One notable example of e-democratic practice is the government-sponsored (or government-authorized) online forum for public input on policymaking. This book investigates these "online consultations" and their effect on democratic practice in the United States and Europe, examining the potential of Internet-enabled policy forums to enrich democratic citizenship. The book first situates the online consultation phenomenon in a conceptual framework that takes into account the contemporary media environment and the flow of political communication; then offers a multifaceted look at the experience of online consultation participants in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France; and finally explores the legal architecture of U.S. and E. U. online consultation. As the contributors make clear, online consultations are not simply dialogues between citizens and government but constitute networked communications involving citizens, government, technicians, civil society organizations, and the media. The topics examined are especially relevant today, in light of the Obama administration's innovations in online citizen involvement.

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