

The Dawn of Digital Democracy

Los albores de la democracia digital

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Modern democracies are not perfect. On one hand, they are affected by problems like corruption, nepotism and populism. On the other, they are shaped by technologies, from printing to the internet.

In recent years, academics and technologists have begun to explore alternatives for enhancing, altering or improving democracy. These include theoretical and practical proposals based on the use of digital tools, from algorithms that seek to maximise the representativeness of deliberation forums to open data systems, voting recommendation and participatory budgeting. These and other proposals are intended to improve public participation, reduce the vulnerability of representative democratic systems, increase the accountability of politicians or simply offer citizens greater control and scrutiny of political actions and decisions.

The monograph *La democracia en la era de la inteligencia artificial* (Democracy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence) explores the possibilities, limits and consequences of the digital transformation of democracy. Contributions come from a variety of perspectives, such as politics, engineering, sociology and moral philosophy.

The monograph begins with the article “Polis: Scaling Deliberation by Mapping High Dimensional Opinion Spaces” by Christopher Small, Michael Bjorkegren, Timo Erkkilä, Lynette Shaw and Colin Megill. This article explains the operation of a platform used for deliberation at scale, which has been successfully used in places such as the United States and Taiwan.

In the second contribution, “Los desafíos de la transformación digital de la democracia” (The Challenges of the Digital Transformation of Democracy), Jorge Francisco Aguirre Sala delves into the ethical and political challenges

underlying the application and use of digital technologies to improve all dimensions of democracy. He pays special attention to eradicating or minimising the negative impacts these digital technologies have on political deliberation processes.

In the third contribution, “Biopolítica, digitalización y porvenir democrático: por qué las gestiones de la COVID-19 confirman un paradigma tecnoeconómico” (Biopolitics, Digitisation and the Democratic Future: Why the Management of COVID-19 Confirms a Techno-Economic Paradigm), Joan Morro penetrates the foundations of the post-pandemic world to reveal and criticise the two main paths of development of democracy today: one which promotes the techno-economic colonisation of the democratic process, and the other which advocates minimising the influence of such disruptive technologies and maximising citizen sovereignty and public scrutiny.

In the fourth contribution, “Polarización artificial: cómo los discursos expresivos inflaman la percepción de polarización política en internet” (Artificial Polarisation: How Expressive Discourses Inflammate the Perception of Political Polarisation on the Internet), Pedro Jesús Pérez Zafrilla analyses the phenomenon of political polarization on the internet from a critical, ethical point of view to show the shortcomings of the discourse underlying it. In this way, he offers guidelines to improve our understanding of polarization and improve the chances of controlling its negative impacts on democracy and intervening to combat them

In the fifth contribution, “Ciudadanías movedizas: ciberpolítica y los dilemas de Twitter como esfera pública/privada” (Shifting Citizenship: Cyberpolitics and the Dilemmas of Twitter as Public/Private Sphere), Álvaro Acevedo-Merlano, Alicia Chamorro Muñoz and Margarita Quintero-León explore the concept of digital citizenship and the types of relationships arising when young people use social networks as tools for political participation and interaction. From a historical-critical perspective, they suggest that Twitter acts as a socio-technical network that produces a shifting form of connection between the public and private spheres.

In the sixth contribution, “Democracia y digitalización: implicaciones éticas de la IA en la personalización de contenidos a través de interfaces de voz” (Democracy and Digitisation: Ethical Implications of AI in the Personalisation of Content through Voice Interfaces), Luis Miguel Pedrero-Esteban and Ana Pérez-Escoda examine the personalisation of content in voice interfaces from a descriptive and analytical perspective to propose an interpretative framework for the development of artificially intelligent audio speakers and

voice assistants equipped with mathematical models as tools to singularise information based on the ethical guidelines for trustworthy AI proposed by the European Commission.

In the seventh and final contribution, “Inteligencia relacional, inteligencia artificial y participación ciudadana. El caso de la plataforma digital cooperativa Les Oiseaux de Passage” (Relational Intelligence, Artificial Intelligence and Citizen Participation. The Case of the Cooperative Digital Platform Les Oiseaux de Passage), David Flores-Ruiz, Blanca Miedes-Ugarte and Prosper Wanner suggest that the cooperative principles and values underlying the social economy are an effective way of minimising the negative impacts on society and its different spheres of activity caused by human relationality increasingly mediated by artificial intelligence.

The seven contributions making up *La democracia en la era de la inteligencia artificial* offer a broad, critical but constructive view of the current irreversible process of the digital transformation of democracy. Spaces for participation, deliberation processes, the post-pandemic context, political polarisation, personalised information, digital citizenship and human relationality are among the main topics covered in the monograph, showing the wide variety of impacts that the application and use of AI have or could have for democracy, the new and complex demands for meaning underlying it and the need for State control and public scrutiny. To achieve all this, the various contributions in the monograph emphasise to differing extents the need to continue promoting spaces for interdisciplinary dialogue that improve the process of digitally transforming democracy in a fair and responsible way. The improvements come through enhancing the positive impact – such as an increase in participation, the construction and capture of public opinion or public security – and controlling and eradicating both its unintended negative consequences (such as increased social exclusion, inequalities, paternalism or heteronomy) and its intentional ones (such as mass surveillance, intrusion into the private and intimate sphere and control over free will).