

Presenter: Jan van Dijk

Professor of Communication Science & Endowed Chair

Sociology of the Information Society, University of Twente, the Netherlands, Department of Communication

The Promise and Practice of Digital Democracy

ABSTRACT

This talk first defines digital democracy as an attempt to practice democracy according to a particular view using digital media. Subsequently, six views of democracy will be briefly reviewed: legalist, competitive, pluralist, participatory, libertarian and plebiscitary. Given the view of democracy embraced, preferences for particular digital media applications can be observed. For example: Internet campaigning in competitive democracy and telepolls in plebiscitary democracy.

In the second part of the lecture Dr. van Dijk will assess the practice of digital democracy over 15 years, systematically comparing the original promises and practices. Original promises include (1) more and better information retrieval, (2) more and better political debates, and (3) improvement of decision making. It will be argued that the first promise or claim has been achieved, the second only partially, and the third scarcely, or not at all.

A fourth promise is a more recent one: the promise of more citizen participation in political (new) media use in the context of so-called Web 2.0. What is the likely outcome of civic journalism, political blogging, and the use of social networking and video sites for political purposes? Will they realize the promise of more participation? The talk examines these and other questions.