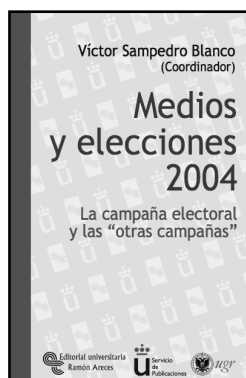


Books review

SAMPEDRO, V. (coord.) *Medios y elecciones 2004: La campaña electoral y las "otras campañas"*.

Madrid: Ed. Univ. Ramon Areces, 2008, 278 pages.

ISBN: 978-84-8004-849-1



As noted by Robert Fishman in the prologue to this volume, the 2004 general elections were not only the most passionate in the history of Spain since the Second Republic, as a consequence of the terrorist attacks on 11 March, but were also the first elections when the role played by the media and new information and communication technologies stood out prominently.

This study, coordinated by Víctor Sampedro, is divided into two volumes: an academic book and a didactic manual accompanied by some DVDs. The first volume analyses the pre-electoral agenda of the elections (the media construction of the *Carod* case), the political-editorial alignments, the information disseminated between 11 March and 14 March and an analysis of the websites and forums of parties in the campaign that shows that these served as a platform of expression and debate between voters and candidates in a very limited sense. Moreover, given the dissatisfaction generated by the information disseminated by the "central public sphere", more critical and mobilised citizens became producers of information, accessing and comparing information from both conventional and alternative sources of information. A shift could be observed towards digital media and platforms, in many cases alternative (the traffic on the internet multiplied by eight at this time), and it was the first time that discussion websites and blogs accessed the process of forming public opinion.

The second volume is a manual accompanied by two DVDs, designed to be used as a didactic resource in universities and secondary schools. Among others, images are offered of the news items on television, the electoral propaganda of state and autonomous community parties and interviews with political leaders.

COSTA, P.-O. (comp.). *Cómo ganar unas elecciones: Comunicación y movilización en las campañas electorales*.

Madrid: Ed- Paidós Ibérica, 2008, 373 pages.

ISBN: 978-84-493-2173-3

Under the general title of *Cómo ganar unas elecciones* (How to win some elections) we find this rigorous and systematic approach to the processes of electoral communication and mobilisation. Divided into three parts, the first tackles the planning and development of election campaigns. The second analyses the relationship with the media and the third describes demoscopic research techniques.



The second part, dedicated to the media in election campaigns and to the elements that a strategic communicator must take into account to ensure good interaction with the media (*publicity*), is made up of articles by Ramentol, Costa and Domingo. Santiago Ramentol analyses the relations between politicians, journalists and the media and gives advice on how to establish a good relationship with the latter. The article by Pere-Oriol Costa analyses the role of television in campaigns and describes the relationship between political discourse and television discourse; the objectives of strategic communication on television; political television in Europe and the United States, and their propaganda instruments: election debates. And finally, the article by David Domingo, "Irrupción de Internet en el panorama electoral", explores the specific characteristics of the internet as an electoral medium with a specific communication strategy. Domingo not only analyses the role of the internet in election campaigns but also its role as an instrument to improve how democracy works and a new means of participation generated for citizens.

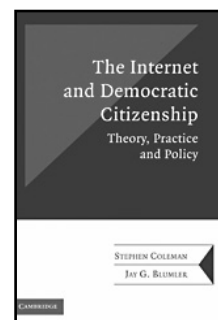
RENIU, J. M. (ed.) *E-voting: The Last Electoral Revolution*. Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials (ICPS) 2008, 156 pages.
ISBN: 978-84-608-0728-5



In this work we find articles about e-voting, i.e. the use of ICTs in the electoral process and specifically when voting electronically. We can find theoretical presentations on the downside of these tools in terms of transparency, possibility for fraud, etc. We can particularly highlight the chapters talking about voting via the internet. In this respect, the focus is

the fact that one of the main drawbacks of suffrage via internet is that it requires a minimum digital literacy that not everyone with a right to vote has acquired at present: while some of the main virtues would be that it adds security to the process, privacy and confidentiality, as well as making it easier for voters to exercise their right. One of the chapters provides the case of Estonia, which has been the first country in the world to use *i-voting* (the difference between *i-voting* and *e-voting* is that the first would be part of the second, only referring to the internet) with binding results, specifically for their 2005 local elections and the 2007 general elections. We might say that this book is an example of how the concept of *e-democracy* is not only linked to the internet but that so-called *i-democracy* is indeed a fundamental piece that is gaining in importance. In fact, in the final chapter, this is one of the conclusions of the editor of this compendium of articles, which provides us with a series of doubts and certainties regarding a theme that is seen as strategic, albeit still in its early stages.

COLEMAN, S.; BLUMLER, J. G. *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship: Theory, Practice and Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 232 pages.
ISBN-13: 978-0-521-81752-3

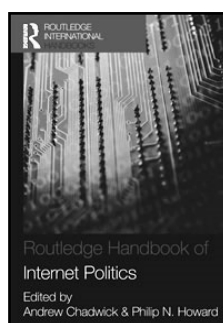


From a position of rigorous academism we receive this work that aims to present the essential problems concerning the use of the internet for political participation in a broad sense. As must be the case, the first chapters of the book are dedicated to profiling a body of theory that explains the deficits of representative democracies as we know them and the role that new technologies could intuitively play in improving these imperfections. It therefore talks of the problem of public deliberation, theories about rational choice, as well as new cultural trends that accompany the introduction of the internet in politics: individualisation, secularisation, reactions of traditional actors in the media system such as journalists and media firms... Chapters 4 and 5 analyse various cases, of particular note being an analysis of the use of the internet for parliamentary politics to get nearer to citizens, with the question of whether this is only promoted from above. Then, and as a replica to the previous chapter, there is an explanation of the strength gained by movements aiming for greater political participation but in the opposite direction, i.e. from below. The book places a lot of emphasis precisely on the effective possibilities that can be strengthened by *e-democracy* based on an initiative of "classic" public policy, leaving open the debate regarding whether the internet will be enough to improve politics or if something else is needed.

CHADWICK, A.; HOWARD, P. N. (eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*.

New York: Routledge, 2009, 512 pages.

ISBN: 978-0-415-42914-6



This excellent manual dedicates its thirty-one chapters to the most important debates arising in the world of politics with the emergence of the internet. The volume is organised into four different sections: institutions, behaviour, identities, and law and politics. In the first part, Ward and Gibson suggest that ICTs are accelerating some of the trends from the pre-internet

era, such as individualisation. Also tackled is the dialectic relationship between technology and political institutions (Anstead and Chadwick), the theory of collective action within the context of the diversity of currently available strategies (Bimber *et al.*) and the relationship between parliamentary democracy and interactive technology (Coleman). In the section dedicated to behaviour, Brundidge and Rice deal with the territory-based fragmentation ("balkanisation") of opinion and citizen commitment to political issues. The article by Mossberger reminds us of the persistence of a digital divide and warns of the risk of creating much greater political imbalance (an issue that is also tackled later on by Dijk). Tewksbury and Rittenberg suggest that new online audiences are more fragmented, something that will have implications in the distribution of political knowledge and the importance of issues for the agenda in the future. From the third part, we can highlight the article by Papacharissi on the new hybrid model of public space, where consumerism and civic rhetoric exist side by side, and the article by van Doorn and van Zoonen, who analyse changes in gender representation. In the last part, dedicated to law and politics, we find quite critical articles, such as the one by Deibert, which underlines how states observe and control content, and the article by Phillips, which denounces the political instruments and controls found on all information networks. Really, this is one of the most complete manuals on politics and the internet.

INSTITUTE FOR POLITICS, DEMOCRACY AND THE INTERNET. *Best Practices for Political Advertising Online*. Washington DC: George Washington University, 2008, 62 pages.

This is a manual distributed free of charge by the Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet (IPDI) from its website. The IPDI is a think tank aimed at different stakeholders related to the world of politics and the internet, translated into the production of materials such as this book. As indicated by its title, it is a useful guide for directors of election campaigns and other professionals to the tools to plan the internet component of their policy. Different experts produce the content that, in the first part of the book, is related to the profile of voters that move around the internet, how to attract them towards the desired political position and general trends today in the area of political communication. In the book's second section, specific instruments are presented that need to be taken into account when the aim is to disseminate electoral and political propaganda on the internet. It also analyses the role of search engines on the internet in order to be better placed in the different rankings and thereby increase the probability of users accessing the sites you wish to promote. In this respect, they also explain strategies to improve conventional advertising on the internet by means of social networks, platforms such as YouTube, among others; and, finally, it talks about how to get sympathisers with leadership capacity (*lead generation*) who wish to get involved voluntarily in political mobilisation. As a whole, this is a highly practical document but a bit behind the times.



Version available online:

<<http://www.ipdi.org/Publications/default.aspx>>

Other books of interest

RUSSELL, A.; ECHCHAIBI, N. *International Blogging*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2009, 201 pages.

MOSSBERGER, K.; TOLBERT, C.J.; McNEAL, R. *Digital Citizenship*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2008, 221 pages.
ISBN: 978-0-262-13285-9

NEGRINE, R. *The Transformation of Political Communication: Continuities and Changes in Media and Politics*. New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2008, 226 pages.
ISBN: 978-0-230-00030-8

REY MORATÓ, J. *Comunicación política, Internet y campañas electorales: De la teledemocracia a la ciberdemocr@cia*. Madrid: Tecnos, 2007, 346 pages.
ISBN: 978-84-309-4506-1