ARCADA

Media & Democracy in the Digital Age: Lincoln Dahlberg and the main issues in contemporary debate

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Sammandrag:

I denna text diskuterar jag på vilket sätt digitala kommunikationsmedel verkar fungera i samtida demokratiska i dagens samhälle. Mer specifikt kommer jag att diskutera huruvida digitala kommunikationsmedel är fungerande verktyg för ett demokratiskt samhälle, samt vad detta innebär i kontexten av samtida demokrati. Målsättningen för den här studien är att kartlägga om detta, i själva verket, håller på att hända i den 'riktiga världen'. Jag har valt att basera min studie på en litteratur analys av samtida (2001-2015) vetenskapliga artiklar. Dessa artiklar handlar huvudsakligen om ämnesområden digital demokrati, samtida demokrati, samt journalism. Min metod begränsar mig i den mån att jag endast beaktar en relativt liten mängd artiklar, samt i den mån att studien huvudsakligen rör sig inom ramerna av koncept analys, då jag använder mig av jämförande analys med teori som bottnar i socialkonstruktivism. Jag beaktar även skribenter med andra teoretiska bakgrunder, om än i mindre skala. Resultatet av studien är att digital kommunikationsmedel verkar vara ett verktyg som fungerar inom demokratisk kontext. Dock finns det vissa begränsingar för hur väl dessa medel fungerar. Huvudsakligen verkar problemområden vara privatiseringen av offentliga kommunikationsmedel (webben), problematiken angående beaktandet av minoritetsdiskurser i offentlig diskurs, samt de skisman som uppstår i hur man skall använda sig av webben och för vilket endamål.

Nyckelord:	Web 2.0, digitalkommunikation, demokrati
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DEGREE THESIS	
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Abstract:

This thesis is concerned with the relation of digital communication to contemporary democracy. More specifically the discussion of whether or not digital communication is a tool suitable for democracy, and what it entails to be a tool in the context of contemporary democracy. The aim of the study is to map out if this, in fact, is realized in actuality. The study is based on a literature review of contemporary (2001-2015) scientific articles which concern themselves with the topics of digital democracy, contemporary democracy, and journalism. The analysis in this text relies on the conceptual and comparative analysis of a sample of articles selected in relation to their relevance. The approach this thesis adopts is mainly that of socio-constructionism, but a number of other views on the subject matter are also explored. The result of this study is that digital communication does seem to work as a tool for democracy, but also that it has its limitations. These limitations seem to mainly revolve around the privatization of the public sphere, the problematic nature of involvement of minority discourse, and the fragmented views on how it ought to be used and for what purpose.

Keywords:	Web 2.0, Digital communication, democracy
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Tiivistelmä:

Tässä tekstissä keskustelen miten digitaalinen kommunikaatio oikeastaan vaikuttaa nyky-yhteiskunnassa. Tarkemmin ottaen tulen keskustelemaan siitä josko digitaaliset kommunikaatio-välineet ovat toimivia työkaluja demokraattisessa nyky-yhteiskunnassa. Tavoitteena tälle tutkielmalle on kartoittaa toimiiko digitaalinen kommunikaatio todellisuudessa demokratiaa lisäävänä elementtinä. Olen valinnut tutkimus-menetelmäkseni kirjallisuus-analyysin. Käyn läpi viimeaikaisia (2001-2015) tieteellisiä artikkeleita, jotka käsittelevät pääasiallisesti digitaalista demokratiaa, nyky-demokratiaa, sekä journalismia. Tutkimusta rajoittaa lähinnä se että käytän pääsääntöisesti käsiteanalyysiä. Vertailen artikkeleita sosiaalikonstruktionismin viitekehyksen puitteissa, mutta käyn myös läpi muiden koulukuntien edustajia, joskin hieman rajatummin. Tutkimuksen tuloksena vaikuttaa minusta siltä että digitaaliset kommunikaatio-välineet todellakin toimivat demokratiaa edistävinä työkaluina. Tosin tiettyjen rajoitusten alaisina. Näihin rajoituksiin sisältyy muun muassa julkisen keskustelun yksityistäminen (viitaten lähinnä internettiin), vähemmistöjen marginalisointi julkisessa keskustelussa, sekä erimielisyydet siitä miten verkkoa tulisi käyttää ja mihin tarkoitukseen.

Avainsanat:	Web 2.0, Digitaalinen kommunikaatio, demokratia
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FOREWORD

This thesis is the first experiment in student participation in the MEDA (Media and Democracy in the Digital Age) research program, which aims to reinvigorate the potential disenchantment towards digital technologies as a tool for democracy.

In recent years there has been a more or less wishful optimism, as well as a great deal of pessimism regarding the practical application of digital communication as a tool for democracy (Dahlberg 2005). Some have pointed towards the inevitability of the privatization, and corporate colonization of the public sphere while others have maintained a much more hopeful view, which is usually closely tied to the powerful addition to communication that the internet affords us. The objective of the thesis is to be able to shed some more light on the question of whether or not there is, in fact, a reason to be pessimistic or optimistic concerning democratic praxis in the age of digital communication.

This text is conducted as a literature review in order to form an understanding of how researchers view digital democracy in contemporary times. A varied selection of articles has been chosen in cooperation with Dr. Stocchetti. Each article is first separately reviewed and has then been pieced together in order to form an at least somewhat coherent understanding of the subject matter, and what it may entail for democracy.

The main focus is on author Lincoln Dahlberg's views on what digital democracy means. This stems from the understanding that he is well respected in the field, as well as from the fact that he offers a fair amount of articles, which cover the subject matter quite thoroughly.

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1 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – COMPARATIVE CONCEPT ANALYSIS AND SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIONISM

This article attempts to answer the question of whether or not digital means of communication (in this case mainly the internet) (Dahlberg 2005) facilitates democracy; by performing a comparative literature analysis of scientific articles, which were related to contemporary democracy, and digital communication. Contemporary in this case meaning within the past 15 years. The past 15 years have been chosen, because two-way digital communication (mainly the internet) had been around long enough to be able to be assessed properly, and because it seems to have stabilized around, broadly speaking, similar technological methods around that time.

In order to better understand the framework of democracy in the digital age (digital democracy) this article relies on the conceptual framework proposed by Lincoln Dahlberg throughout a series of publication on this topic. In the following chapter an outline for the baseline framework which is used as the basis for my analysis of contemporary research on digital democracy. This will be achieved by applying comparative concept analysis, within the framework of socio-constructionism.

1.1 Democracy in the digital age: Lincoln Dahlberg

Author Lincoln Dahlberg (2001 b) presents a distinction of three rudimentary political models, or camps of democratic rhetoric, and practice, without, as he puts it, offering a critical evaluation of the positions. The camps are: the liberal individualists, the communitarianists, and the deliberative democrats. Concerning the last, he argues that it offers, at least in a sense, a middle ground between the two other (above mentioned) extremes offered up on the buffet of political discourse.

The liberal individualists are here defined as the underlying principle of a range of opinions, which all share a set number of traits. Dahlberg (2001 b) argues that the liberal individualist conception of democratic legitimacy comes from the view of the individual as a rational, autonomous subject who is both knowledgeable and able to express

themselves for the benefit of themselves. Additionally, this view also seems to include the notion, which, as Dahlberg (2001 b) argues, "parallels the classic economic agent"; in that it views the subject as a self-seeking utility maximizer. This 'self-seeking utility maximizer' is a free agent in the marketplace of ideas, which lies in opposition to the view of the communitarianists.

They argue (according to Dahlberg, 2006), against the rampant individualism, as it arguably is portrayed by the liberal individualists, as well as against the over commercialization and bureaucratization of societies. The main goal of communitarianism seems to be to revive communities through the affordances of novel communication apparatus. The view of the subject is also a little different than that of the liberal individualist view. The communitarianist sees the self as a piece of the puzzle that is the community. To the communitarianist society, this is the one thing which enables the freedom of individual self-realization, which is fostered through various forms of (especially interactive) media.

The third option Dahlberg presents is that of the deliberative democracy camp. By this he seems to mean a model where the basis lies in the deliberative democratic notion of basing (political) decision on rational dialogue. To support his argument of the third camp he invokes both Benjamin Barber's (1984), and Abramson et al. (1988) notion of the use of digital communicative devices to foster a 'strong democracy' through either being persuaded by, or persuading, your peers through a rational argumentation in order to justify your opinion regarding an issue, with the 'common good' as the principle goal.

In conclusion he discusses that the cause for the lack of critical evaluation in this study is due to its aim, which is to provide a framework for further research into the subject matter. He also mentions that both regarding research and promotion, a large quantity of material is (even as early as 2001 b) already in existence, while the two other camps have received much less consideration. However, the communitarian, while paling in comparison, has still received a considerable amount of attention, while he maintains the deliberative camp is the least considered option of the three above mentioned camps. Dahlberg (2001 b), then, finally argues for the fruitfulness of further analysis into the intersection of the Internet, and deliberative democracy, as a means of enhancing contemporary democratic practices.

In 2010, Dalhberg takes a look at the cyber-libertarian ethos. The view, as he argues, has made a 'come-back' in both the academic discourse, and in discourse of popular

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technology. The cyber-libertarian view seems to be that of a subject who is described to be both creative, and autonomous. He sets out to identify the limit of this novel form of cyber-libertarianism or the "cyber-libertarian 2.0", as he puts it, merging the two related concepts of the Web 2.0, and the cyber-libertarianism into one. The concept seems to hold within itself the notion of the citizen as a prosumer (producer & consumer), rather than a politically oriented citizen. And, unsurprisingly, the same view applies to the means as well, in other words mainly the internet. The suggestion here being that this would then transcend the outdated model of antagonistic politics, with party solidarities and similar aspects which might constrain the freedom of the individual. The transcendence is proposed to happen via the strategic harmonization of the web; thereby creating a conflict-free arena, through networked private interactions, transactions, and exchanges.

His main critique of the cyber-libertarian ethos is that it, as he argues, does not take (sufficiently) into account the exploitation of consumer-capitalism. He comes to this conclusion after identifying the various aspects which the cyber-libertarian 2.0 view entails. Primarily that of the DIY citizen-consumer, whose digital networking creates a conflict-free realm, and thereby transcends the existing (political) institutions. As well as its naming of an enemy, the old nation-state politics. This, he argues, is more or less counter-intuitive as it is in fact global, exploitative, capitalism which ought to be their enemy. He arrives at the conclusion after doing an extensive political reading of "the situation". He then points out that, he believes, cyber-libertarianism 2.0 in fact lies in, at least, ideological support for both neoliberal, as well as consumer capitalism.

A decade after the release of his first attempt at aligning democratic rhetoric and practice, Dahlberg (2011) reimagines his three camp theory in his article, *Reconstructing digital democracy: An outline of four 'positions',* he is concerned with creating a framework for an improved understanding of digital-democracy. The framework is built on critical-interpretation, rather than evaluation, of the political landscape surrounding digital democracy. The interpretation process is focused solely on the internet, as the author posits that it is, not only rapidly developing into the basis for essentially all digital communication media, but is also moving in to play a very central role in all digital democracy rhetoric and practice (Dahlberg, 2011). The author (2011) comes to the conclusion that what he calls the democratic subject assumed, the understanding of democracy, and the associated democratic affordances of digital media technology are the key components, or lenses, through which the author chooses to look

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at the wide spectrum of individuals and groups who associate themselves with digital democracy and where their values land. Dahlberg (2011) names four re-constructed positions; the liberal individualist, the deliberative, the counter-publics, and the autonomist Marxist. These four positions form possible 'ideological trees', not in the sense that anyone is locked into them, but as an the attempt to pin down some grain of understanding – so as to better understand how to approach the situation. In other words a framework.

The first of the four positions is more or less the same as it was in 2001; the liberal-individualist position is described as a democratic subject understood to be an individual, rational, self-seeking, instrumental utility maximizer who knows his/her own best interests. Dahlberg suggests that the vision of a 'market place of ideas' is attached to this notion. The second position, the deliberative, arises from a rational deliberative process, rather than being pre-defined as is the case in liberal-individualists. The subject deliberates, with the aim to increase the 'common good', a critically informed public opinion which in turn is able to lead to better choices in the public sphere. The author also points out that much of the digital sphere of media, and the internet have been suggested to already afford information sharing, rational debate, and public opinion formation – which are the building blocks of the deliberative position. This newer view seems to have merged much of the older notion of communitarianism. The third position is the counter-publics. The advocates of counter-publics view the digital media as a platform for the alternative, marginalized, or otherwise oppressed groups. Those who advocate counter-publics digital democracy have been known to consider themselves radically democratic. The fourth position, the autonomist Marxist, view the realm of digital democracy as a basis for building a society where radically democratic politics, undistorted by perceived corrupt systems such as centralized state and capitalist systems, can create a fully democratic 'commons'.

1.2 Deliberative digital democracy, or the internet as a public sphere

Dahlberg has been influential in promoting the view of the internet as an agora, a place where citizens can gather and share information. In other words his suggestion (and he is not alone in this) is to view the internet as a public sphere, as the term is presented by

Jürgen Habermas in the late 60's, and those who have continued work on his ideas. In order to be able to use this as a theoretical framework, an attempt to open up what he means will be made in this article.

In 2001 (2001a) Dahlberg published a paper in which he discusses the affordances of the internet for a decentralization of communication. He argues that this happens through sites which hold an autonomy over state and economic interests, which has been suggested might extend the public sphere. He compares the deliberative practices made possible by the internet with the normative model of the public sphere, as presented by Jürgen Habermas, concluding that analysis of the data gathered on the subject suggests that there is indeed a reciprocity in communication happening on the web. However, he also points out that there are factors which limit the possibilities of online critical discussion, namely that of the corporate and state interest groups moving into the same interest areas, as well as a lacking respectfulness for listening to others, the problematic nature of anonymity, and that of certain interest groups dominating the online discourse.

In order to approach the issue at hand, Dahlberg refers to Habermas' theory of rational communication, which he views as the most systematic critical theory available, as far as democratic communication theories are concerned. The public sphere, as understood here (2001 a & 2004), is constituted by a moral-practical discourse; with the ultimate aim of solving political problems. According to this theory, those engaged in this moral-practical discourse presuppose a number of pragmatic presuppositions, thereby setting up the normative conditions of the public sphere.

Dahlberg breaks these presuppositions down into six categories;

1. Autonomy from state, and economic power, by which is meant that discourse ought to be driven by the concerns of the citizen, rather than by the media of money or administrative power looking to facilitate the market, and the state.

2. Exchange and critique of criticisable moral-practical validity claims, meaning the inclusion, in discourse, of rational-critique of normative positions, reached through reason rather than through dogmatic assertions.

3. Reflexivity, meaning the critical evaluation of held positions (such as cultural values, and the larger social context) by those participating in discourse.

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4. Ideal role-taking, which means the need for participants of the discourse to adhere to the will of understanding the perspectives of other participants.

5. Sincerity, by which is meant the intellectual honesty of participants in their effort to make all information available which is relevant to the topic (including, but not limited to their own true intentions).

6. Discursive inclusion and equality, by which is meant simply that all participants must be treated as equally valuable presenters of ideas.

In conclusion of his study, Dahlberg (2001a) observes that the dynamics, provided by different software applications, inevitably distort communication. He therefore continues to point to the importance of a conscious development of means of communication which fosters the normative public sphere, which arguably fosters a fair, and democratic discourse.

Expanding on his own text from 2001 (b), Dahlberg proceeds in 2001 (c) to examine how deliberative democratic discourse could be fostered on the internet. He does so, partly, by starting from the notion of the importance of the public sphere, which he argues deliberative democratic discourse fosters, and partly due to the nature of the research findings on the subject, which have shown there are limitations which are due to the interests of the market forces and governmental instances marginalizing the issue, but also by pre-existing ingrained notions of hostility towards public deliberation.

Dahlberg conducts this analysis through his three camp model (Dahlberg, 2001 b) of digital democracy rhetoric and practice, and the notion of the importance of a strong public sphere, as presented in his earlier paper (Dahlberg, 2001 a). He reviews many initiatives, including the Minnesota E-Democracy-initiative, and the UK Citizen Online Democracy. From this review he concludes that there is an apparent lack of activity, and interest shown towards online acts of deliberative democracy. The activities within these initiatives seem to be focused, both quantitatively, and qualitatively, around individuals already in positions of dominant power in the offline world. This, he argues, puts serious doubt on the legitimacy of the inclusiveness, and the equality of the deliberative discourse establishing rather what Habermas calls the "bourgeois public sphere": a communicative space where a selected few people and ideas dominate the discussion, through the marginalization of less popular notions and the majority of people. Instead of allowing for a setting as fair, and egalitarian as, hypothetically, possible by digital communication means, to any willing participant, in order to create a more inclusive,

and vibrant discourse, the internet thus become a tool that reinforce the influence of elites. This, Dahlberg argues, calls for state, and public interest groups to intervene, in the form of funding, and other forms of support, such as, specific legislation designed to secure a certain measure of equality among the participants of digital communication.

In 2004, Dahlberg presents some proposals for the creation of a habermasian public sphere on the internet. He does so in the hopes of clarifying how to combine theory and practice, He hopes analysis of their validity can be confirmed, in the face of the multiplicity of problematics (e.g. the validity of the theory of the public sphere, and the dynamic nature of both the internet, and human interactions in general). He starts off by trying to evaluate what exactly is meant when the term the public sphere is used, as it has become a fairly broad, and general term. The term is often touted, but when looked at closely there seems to be fairly little, to no consensus as to what it specifically means. He suggests that the most systematic, and rigorously developed basis for the public sphere comes from the most recent update of Habermas' own theory.

Dahlberg (2004) argues that for many deliberative theorists, including Habermas himself, the public sphere seems to be a form of rational communication; in other words an action, which involves the public use of reason, with the expressed aim of creating a mutual understanding of the subject matter. He follows this by returning to the six presuppositions, as mentioned above (as presented in Dahlberg 2001a).

From there Dahlberg turns his attention to the problem of, what he calls, "the transition between public sphere definition and empirical evaluation". He suggests that this is a problem mainly due to two aspects; first of all, due to the poor understanding of what indicators to choose from when representing change in respective studies, and secondly, that there has been fairly little empirical study into the subject matter. The two aspects may very well be linked together in a significant manner.

The third problem Dahlberg addresses in his 2004 article is the reckless over assumptions of the statistical generalisability of results, and the subsequent ignorance of the limitations of the scope of the study, which then leads to false assumptions. This, then, of course increases the risk of future studies building on already faulty theory, further cluttering the field of study.

Dahlberg (2007 a) challenges the deliberative democratic notion of 'strong' democracy. He does so to answer to the critique offered by opponents of the deliberative model; namely, that the deliberative model fails to fully take into account power structures,

thereby supporting the current unequal political systems. What he finds is, first of all, that the critique of not accounting for power is both false, and true all at once. He argues that the model does account for power, but seemingly fails in the theorizing-portion, in that it fails to do justice to the power relations in any given deliberative process. He raises two instances, which he argues have been largely overlooked in research. The two categories are discursive radicalism, and inter-discursive contestation.

Dahlberg is confident the notion of the public sphere, is still a useful one in opposition to what some other internet-democratic commentators propose. He does, however, suggest drawing on a different understanding of the public sphere; namely the understanding held by the counter-publics. He calls this view the agonistic view, in order to accredit the view's radically democratic outlook. He believes this will enable him to account for the democratic role of radical exclusion, as well as the corresponding inter-discursive contestation.

What Dahlberg seems to suggest, when he talks about the agonistic model of the public sphere, is that we ought to lose the concept of the public sphere as a single unified deliberative space, and rather see it as a mosaic of contesting publics. Which would then, of course, include both dominant and counter forms of the publics. He maintains that it is, in fact, possible to create this radical democratic public sphere on the internet.

In 2007 (Dahlberg, 2007b) he discusses the concerns raised by some deliberative democrats; namely the fragmentation of interest groups on the web. The fragmentation sees 'like-minded' groups show up, causing subjects to refrain from reflexive discourse in the public sphere. The suggested remedy for this is to, once more, reconceptualize the public sphere; in this case as a place, honed by discursive contestation. What this seems to mean is to push research to understand how, and why these 'like-minded' groups show up, as well as pushing for solutions which cause increased discursive contestation.

Dahlberg (2007 b) also mentions the problematic nature of the corporate media portals and sites. The problem is that corporate media portals and sites produce a dominant discourse which drives counter-public discourse into a position of unequally limited exposure, as they tend to lack the means to maintain exposure.

As I read through the Dahlberg's articles, a recurring theme was an underlying criticism of the privatization of the public sphere: a topic too important to be brushed aside without a mention. Not only as it does pose problematic situations (as well as offer solutions) in political praxis, and rhetoric, which is clearly relevant to the subject matter

at hand, but also because society is, in the end, what I am discussing here. And society does not exist in a vacuum, void of economic, ideological, and other aspects. I will then mention, briefly Dahlberg's argument about the privatization of the internet and its impact on the possibility that this medium could effectively perform as a digital public sphere.

Dahlberg discusses in a paper (2005a) about the application of the Frankfurt School's critical theory on the internet. He presents the matter as that there seemed to have been an extraordinary amount of enthusiasm over the dawn of the internet. This enthusiasm seems to have stemmed from the period of time marked by great pessimism regarding the use of media as a tool for a fair(er) public sphere, as the television, the radio, and other media outlets had become increasingly privatized. With the dawn of the internet there was a hope for a more democratic public sphere. It was thought that the mechanics of the internet could provide the key components for what a democratic public sphere needed. The hope was that the internet would become a decentralized two-way communication apparatus. However, the hype was short-lived, and quite soon researchers found that the potential (nigh) utopian public sphere that the cyberspace was honed to be was threatened by corporate colonization, as had been the case with other media outlets.

In the spring of 2005 Dahlberg (2005b) publishes an article about the corporate colonization of the public sphere. He talks about a related study he was involved in, which found that the most popular sites for acquiring both content, and interaction with peers were dominated in and by large by the corporate media portals – thus arguably by corporate interests. This, he argues, puts the usefulness of the internet (as a tool for critical analysis) into jeopardy. He points to the potential impeachment on the free communication on the web as a problem. This, at least, in the sense that the mass media wouldn't be free from the distortions of economic interests, as opposed to the interests of the democratic processes. Dahlberg seems convinced, leaning on the consensus that many researchers have come to (2005b) that the private sector is instrumentalizing communication, which he holds is a threat to the public sphere. Dahlberg argues that this is caused by the particular (in this case predominantly) political ideals held by those controlling the mass media.

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2 DEMOCRACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DEBATE OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS

In this section of the thesis the sample of 20 articles dealing with the notions of digital democracy are discussed in order to compare Dahlberg's notion with the contributions from the broader debate. The articles in the sample have been selected from the database of Sage journals by me and my supervisor based on intersubjective criteria of relevance. I will first run through the articles, and then attempt to come to a conclusion over what they share in common with each other, through an attempt at answering what democracy, and digital democracy are, seen through the lenses of these twenty articles.

A Contemporary History of Digital Journalism (Scott, 2005), is a historical take on the topic of American journalism. The author, after reviewing American journalism from 1995-2005, comes to the conclusion that there is a dangerous trend (which at least to me) seems to be holding on to this day a decade later. The trend is that newsrooms make more and more space for better business strategies; as in more ads and more sensationalist topics, without problematizing the moral behind being in a position of influence over subjects, concerning topics such as equality, civic landscapes and other democratic values.

> "bold infringements on principles of diversity, comprehensive representation, and public responsibility are being passed off as financial necessities and covered over by branding campaigns and more entertaining production values in the newsroom. Meanwhile, the heady promise of free information has also been squashed. Systematically, America's most trusted news sources are walling off ever-increasing portions of news sites and pricing them in the marketplace. In the digital arena, advertisers have been given even more power to determine the direction of journalism in the future."

The main point of the article, that of the privatization, and commercialization of the media, supports the concerns raised by Dahlberg (2005a, 2005b). But, Scott (2005) does, however, leave a feint glimmer of hope in saying that there is, indeed, still good journalism and that the internet does afford the possibility for more and better journalism. Finally emphasizing the need for more (of what I assume is) state control, in order to secure that journalism doesn't get entirely chewed up by the cogwheels of free market capitalism.

This article emphasizes the thin line between private, and public, which any democracy needs to walk in order to provide both security, and welfare; as well as opportunity to express oneself freely, and pursue that which is meaningful. It talks volumes about the potential risk that privatization of essential democratic organs brings with it, which seems to be the case in contemporary society.

The value theory of democracy (Brettschneider, 2006), sets out to create a value theory of democracy, which the author bases on liberal views of democracy. He argues that, traditionally, democratic theories have put emphasize on the importance of procedure, rather than the individual's rights. He, then, goes on to argue that the democratic ideal should be based on a core set of values. He presents the core-values in three distinct categories; *political autonomy*, *equality of interest*, and *reciprocity*. What he seems to mean by political autonomy is that every citizen be treated as a sovereign, and individual ruler in a society. While the notion of equality of interest seems to mean that every (reasonable) interest of a citizen ought to be met with equal respect, and that any one person's interest should hold no more weight than another's, due to social position or class. And that the notion of reciprocity means that policies must be defensible by appeal to arguments that any reasonable citizen may accept.

The article lies in relation to the question of what democracy is, in that it creates a framework for the potential outlook on what democracy, at its core is; in other words principles, rooted in reason. A democratic society is, as Brettschneider puts it: "founded upon respect for the self-ruling status of the citizens who compose a democratic people" (2006).

Towards An African Journalism Model: A Critical Historical Perspective (Shaw, 2009), seeks to rectify the perception that African journalism is merely a part of the western sphere of journalistic theory and argues for the narrative of independent growth of African journalism. It takes on the subject matter through a historical lense, with focus on Africa. It contrasts the African journalism model to the western take on journalism. Arguing that this needs to be done in order to break the pre-conceptions of the African models level of independence from western thought and to create a narrative of African journalism's independent growth. Pointing to prevalent liberal democratic myths of 'objectivity', and 'impartiality', which he argues is more consumer than community-

oriented, calling it both a 'dangerous orthodoxy', as well as a 'license for rampant individualism and the enshrinement of selfishness'. To support his case he discusses Haas, and Steiner's view that journalism involves more than simply a neutral information transfer. He also reminds us that there is reason to ensure that the interests of subordinate social groups are articulated and heard. From there the author argues that if African culture is to be preserved more focus on African journalism is needed in order to first understand, and then utilize that knowledge for the improvement and preservation of African culture in an ever more global, and, arguably, increasingly monocultural world.

The article points in the direction of broadening our horizon's from established theories within journalism (perhaps with implications in other parts of culture as well) – calling them, broadly speaking, eurocentric. In so doing the article relates mainly to the question of what democracy is, in that it defends a more pluralistic model of thought, as well as an inclusionary vision of the world – as opposed to that of an, arguably, ochlocraticly democratic view.

Social news, citizen journalism and democracy (Goode, 2009) finds its main point in what seems to be about broadening the concept of, and the surrounding conceptual-area of 'citizen journalism'; through reconceptualizing around the topic and further researching the subject matter.

Goode concludes that even though the article draws up a (at least potential) framework from which, he argues, we could bring about a more sustained structure of and for research, he reminds us that this article concentrates on the forms and structures, rather than on the substance of the articles. Goode then lines up three topics for potential future work – based on the articles structural analysis. The three basic arenas for research he portrays are; first, *status and social capital* – Which sets out to answer how hierarchies are set-up in communities of digital journalism (mainly on the web)? And how this hierarchy affects the outcome of news (subjects/substance/structures)? The second is *online editors and moderators*, which poses the questions of what impact the different editors and/or moderators have on the news (and subsequent discussion of said news) and what effect this has on the receptions of the news? And the third area; *the Code*. The area from where he posits the questions of how aesthetics (the layout, which news show up – taxonomical hierarchies) affect the news outlet; what effect does this have on how we view the world? How big of a role does the structure of sites have on journalism in an emerging digital age? The author suggests that these thematical fields

hold a rich potential for research and debate which should create a better, more dynamic, and nuanced understanding of journalism in the digital age.

The article touches on some of the key elements in digital democracy, as it studies the structural frameworks of journalism in the digital age. It, therefore, relates mainly to what digital democracy is in that it points out the more subtley nuanced problems in digital journalism – which, arguably, is a major part of the future of (digital) democracy.

Municipal councillors in metropolitan governance: Assessing the democratic deficit of new regionalism in Switzerland (Plüss, 2011). The article tackles contemporary Swiss (direct) democracy, evaluating how it fares in a modern world.

The article relies on a study conducted prior to the article, which seems to lead the author to the conclusion that there is a fairly low chance of any form of major reform on the Swiss political horizon – at least as far as regionalism (cantonism) is concerned. But, the study also shows that there might be reason to believe that a higher degree of representationalism might be needed in Swiss democracy. This, the author argues, is to counter-act the tendencies of power imbalance that the study suggests – which stems from wealth disparities, which enable the rich(er) to gain an unfair advantage in the political realm.

This article gives insight into the workings of Swiss regionalistic (and direct) democracy, as well as underlines the importance of equality in power (in this case imbalanced through unevenly distributed wealth).

Re-constructing digital democracy: An outline of four 'positions' by Lincoln Dahlberg (2011) is concerned with creating a framework for an improved understanding of digital-democracy. The framework is built on critical-interpretation, rather than evaluation, of the political landscape surrounding digital democracy. The interpretation process is focused solely on the internet, as the author posits that it is not only rapidly developing into the basis for essentially all digital communication media, as well as being in a very central role in all digital democracy rhetoric and practice (Dahlberg, 2011). The author (2011) comes to the conclusion that what he calls the democratic subject assumed, the understanding of democracy, and the associated democratic affordances of digital media technology are the key components, or lenses, through which the the author chooses to look at the wide spectrum of individuals and groups

who associate themselves with digital democracy and where their values land. Dahlberg (2011) names four re-constructed positions; the liberal individualist, the deliberative, the counter-publics, and the autonomist Marxist. These four positions form possible 'ideological trees', not in the sense that anyone is locked into them, but as an the attempt to pin down some grain of understanding – so as to better understand how to approach the situation. In other words a framework.

The first of the four positions; the liberal-individualist position is described (2011) as a democratic subject understood to be an individual, rational, self-seeking, instrumental utility maximizer who knows his/her own best interests. The author suggests that the vision of a 'market place of ideas' is attached to this notion. The second position, the deliberative, arises from a rational deliberative process, rather than being pre-defined as is the case in liberal-individualists. The subject deliberates, with the aim to increase the 'common good', a critically informed public opinion which in turn is able to lead to better choices in the public sphere. The author also points out that much of the digital sphere of media, and the internet have been suggested to already afford information sharing, rational debate, and public opinion formation – which are the building blocks of the deliberative position. The third position is the counter-publics. The advocates of counter-publics view the digital media as a platform for the alternative, marginalized, or otherwise oppressed groups. Those who advocate counter-publics digital democracy have been known to consider themselves radically democratic. The fourth position, the autonomist Marxist, view the realm of digital democracy as a basis for building a society where radically democratic politics, undistorted by suggested corrupt systems such as centralized state and capitalist systems, can create a fully democratic 'commons'.

What this article shows about digital democracy is that it seems the internet (and more generally technology) is going to play an elementary role in whatever both contemporary democracy, and its sibling digital democracy are going to constitute as the informational era unravels with all of its potential wonders and dangers. The article also lays out a political grid, so as to help in the navigation of the political waters of the digital age.

The main issue of the article *How much democracy does journalism need?* (Beate, 2012)*,* is to answer the question, as the title implies, how tied together journalism, and democracy truly are. The author underlines the importance of this question by pointing out that the majority of newspapers are, in fact printed in Asia – which also boasts the

highest reader count in the entire world. The article looks at what journalism is argued to gain from democracy; the freedom of expression, and its constituents. The author questions if this is something that only democracy can offer, backing up his argument with examples, such as Al Jazeera – which fosters a lively political debate, regardless of the un-democratic nature of the government under which it works. The eventual conclusion the author draws is that journalism, in order to work, needs the support of the public, the elected politicians or other political elites and rulers. It needs them to value the independent information provision, and to have them have faith in the credibility of their decisions in choice and portrayal of news stories. Underlining that this can be achieved outside of democratic structures. The author does, however, not make claims on whether or not this is more readily available through democratic governance. What it seems to suggest (to me) is that journalism is invaluable to any governmental style, but that the value of what it gives to the citizen of the country comes from its transparency, which stems from the support of the government, the citizen and the various organization working in, on, and out of society. Never the less, the question of whether democratic societies foster this transparency better or worse than their counterparts, remains unanswered.

As to what this tells about what democracy (and as an extention digital democracy) is, is that it portrays the importance of transparency in a society, especially in a democratic one. It contemplates what affordancies are specific to democracy, through comparison of how journalism works with other governmental styles, underlining the role transparency has on the efficiency, and substance of journalism.

The historical roots of the normative model of journalism (Nerone, 2012), attempts to improve our understanding of journalism through a look back at the historical events that lead to what is now considered the normative model of journalism. The author critically examines the notion of what we think of as journalism, and criticizes the end result's (the normative model) objective validity. He suggests that the foundation for the hegemonic western journalism lies in the acquisition of power to determine what facts, and ideas would be presented, as in when journalists took on the role of gatekeepers. He argues that this imbalance in power, while inherently is not a massive issue, has become one through the bastardization of values concerned with objectively reporting matters of civic concern. This bastardization of values, he argues, is caused, in part, by the nigh-monopolizing of the media-market. Towards the end of the article the author talks about

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some of the more problematic areas in journalistic practices. These are first, the tendency toward populism, which the author claims comes from the nigh monopolistic stature of some journalistic organizations. Secondly, from corrupt practices, which, again, stem from the nigh monopolistic stature of some (if not most) journalistic organisations. And the third, he argues, comes from the deference towards public intellect, by which the author seems to indicate that journalists do not consider most 'normal' people to carry within them the capacity to judge what is newsworthy.

This article relates mainly to the question of what democracy entails, in that it inspects on what grounds we hold certain deeply rooted views on journalism (which as the author mentions is considered an integral part of democracy). But it also relates to what digital democracy means, in that it lays out the basis from which we have launched ourselves into the digital age of journalism – which is, arguably, a major part of what digital democracy is.

Privacy and democracy: What the secret ballot reveals (Lever, 2012), seems to find its main point in the discussion of the topic of what privacy in voting (e.g. The secret ballot) has to offer. The author opens with a look at what she means when she says democracy, then moves on to assess both Brettschneider's value theory, and privacy in voting. Lever (2012) invokes, first off, an open mindedness to the view of what democracy is, and does so quite eloquently:

"Taking seriously the idea that many different types of association and relationship can be democratic, suggests that we are likely to have a rather impoverished idea of the variety of forms that democracy can take, of which the ones we know are, at best, a subset. And taking seriously the fact that our societies are imperfectly democratic, commends modesty in taking our societies as models of democracy. "

Lever lists the three, most important criteria for the basis of any democracy:

1. universal suffrage, or the idea that each vote is equally weighted, regardless of the subjects wealth, knowledge, virtue, or pedigree.

2. equality under the the law (as opposed to one law for the rich and another for the poor for example), as part of this, she includes, constitutions which hold in place both governor and governed.

3. freedom of expression, which is to be both protected, and held up in all vistas of life throughout society.

The author argues that Brettschneider's value theory is, at best, one among many and cannot be considered universal. Furthermore, the author argues, this shows us that more attention toward democratic procedures can heighten our understanding of the civic life, and thereby our ability to govern democratically. Underlining that the right to privacy (among other things, but not limited to, the secret ballot) is also paramount. She goes as far as saying that, "[...] Privacy is valuable from a democratic perspective even though it means that we cannot detect or punish all forms of immorality. But whether we attach more importance to the instrumental or intrinsic aspects of privacy depends on what other values we hold, and what threats to democracy we fear." (Lever, 2012).

What this article tells is that democracy is a public sphere – from which springs forth the ideas which need space to be able to grow. The public and the private must walk hand in hand. Growing, side by side, both privacy, and transparency are part of the same state of affairs, they simply serve different, yet equally important roles.

Digital prefigurative participation: The entwinement of online communication and offline participation in protest events (Mercea, 2012), is a review of a three-year empirical study which examined the potential contribution that computer-mediated communication (CMC) can bring to offline social movements. The author starts by dividing what he means by participation into three categories; m*obilization, identity building, and organization transformation.* In the study the organizing efforts of two types (low-risk, and high-risk) of offline events were monitored in order to see how people participate in the online enviroment, when concerned with offline issues. The contrasted participation in high- and low-risk protests, the author argues, creates a juxtaposition which opens up to inspection important differences in participatory behaviour - specifically in how people participate in protests, and which ones they choose. The author concludes that if you aren't deeply involved in a high-risk event your digital participation will dwindle, perhaps due to fears of repercussions; while, on the other hand, even if you aren't highly engaged in a low-risk event, but the cause interests you, then you are likely to engage in digital participation. This conclusion seems to have contradicted the original study's hypothesis.

The article re-examines our view of how people work in an environment of digital participation. Which seems to mainly be that people seem wary about participation unless they're already engaged in it – when faced with a high-risk situation. While, on the other hand, low-risk situations foster the opposite behaviour.

Using Social Network Sites to Improve Communication Between Political Campaigns and Citizens in the 2012 Election (Bor, 2013) engages in an examination of the apparent lack of research on social media's impact on political campaigning (and the subsequent results thereof). Through qualitative interviews with campaign staff, Bor found that social media had been utilized in both sending a message more effectively, and, to a lesser degree, to receive a message concerning what the public claimed it wanted, and what the public seemed to be engaged in. The author points out that even though social media facilitates a dialogue it did not succeed in creating one in this case (the 2012 elections); as the interviewees shared with her that they never interjected themselves into conversations on their discussion forums, with an exception being made only if it was directly related to contributing to the campaign's resources. The article relates to the improved understanding of the link(s) between digital democracy, and democracy, as it examines how social media has been utilized in the 2012 elections (US). While the results seem rather self-evident; they tell a story of reluctance towards outright dialogue, at least by those invested in becoming representatives for the state.

Bor's conclusion is that, as social media is still quite novel, the implications for the potential power in using social media as a tool is vast, but that much more research ought to be done in order to fully understand, and utilize its power.

Conversation through journalism: Searching for organizing principles of public and citizen journalism (Min, 2015), points out perspectives, on digital journalism, which may be used to move us in the direction of potential ways in which these perspective can be utilized for the betterment of democracy. The author suggests that 'conversation', the feedback-loop of information afforded by the interactivity of digital media, should be the organizing principle for any and all future journalistic ventures. Continuing on a tangential note the author argues that the governing principles of the past: objectivity and distance, may not be as critical in the future of journalism. The author points out that the term 'conversation', in journalism, comes with its own set of baggage, in that it has been utilized in the past in efforts which have been less than successfully executed;

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leaving many feeling betrayed, and disenfranchised by those in power. As a sort of counter-measure to this the author suggests a re-conceptualization of what is important in journalism. What he means by this is that there must be an understanding of what the notion of 'conversation' means in contemporary terms. 'Conversation', as he suggests it ought to be put, means to be transparent, and interactive (critically viewing the world; in a non-exclusionairy manner) in ones efforts to portray information. In conclusion the author urges us towards a more inclusive decision-making, in a democratic fashion, through utilization of the potential in citizen journalism. Laying special emphasize on professional journalists to take on the role of both monitor, and moderator, as well as verifier and sense maker of the public sphere of life. Suggesting that this may lead to a rise in trust towards both politics, and other matters of citizenship.

The article relates to the question of what democracy is in that it suggests a re-conceptualization of what role journalism plays in contemporary democracies. But, it also ties in with the understanding of digital democracy in that it forms these ideas around the basis for digital democracy (the more or less unfettered communication), and in so doing creates a potential concept for looking at what democracy means now, and in the future. The author reminds us, once more, that democracy is an unfinished project, and that with every new tool (in this case a significant one: the internet), comes a new task: to form an understanding of the task at hand – how to view it, and how to tackle it. The article also reminds us to take a look back to find wisdom in old views; it does so by refreshing the concept of 'conversation' as the center of democratic growth. It also creates a potential conceptual framework for viewing journalism (a integral tool of democracy – arguably, even more so than before) in the modern world. The view seems to hold 'conversation' at its heart; with important principles such as interactivity, and transparency as its tools. This, hopefully, might be able to creative a positive feedback-loop, in that information passes back and forth, and comes out better because of it.

Does democracy matter? Comparative perspectives on violence and democratic institutions (Karstedt, 2015). This article serves as a reminder of the importance of critically assessing what is actually derived from democracy, as to have the right 'selling points', but also to better be able to understand what democracy is. It also offers a narrative on where the roots of civic welfare stem from. The article sets out to find out whether or not something in democracy inherently halts violence. It does so by taking a look at the 2011 book by Steven Pinker *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, which asks,

and attempts to answer the same question as this article does. The article points to the book in saying that two particular historical events act as the moral underpinnings of contemporary value systems. Those two events are the Humanitarian Revolution, and the Rights Revolution. The author recognizes, rightfully so, that these are not tied in with democracy per se. She argues that while democracies have the potential to reduce violence to the lowest levels, they do so in company with a number of autocratic states. She says that it is more the mind-set that democracy brings out that causes its lesser affinity towards violence, in comparison to less democraticly governed societies. Concluding that while it may be beneficial to be a democratic country, there seems to be more correlation between reduced violence and solid infrastructure (based on values set in motion by HR and RR).

Media, pluralism and democracy: what's in a name? (Maesele et al. 2015) attempts to understand the different conceptual and normative assumptions (which ideas there are) concerning media, pluralism, and democracy. It does this to push the boundaries of research of media pluralism; through limiting the study's subject to three schools of democracy (and their corresponding media roles). These schools of thought are the liberal, the deliberative, and the agonistic. The liberal view is that the media are simply part of a marketplace of ideas, while the deliberative sees the media as public consensus builders, and the agonistic hold that the role of the media is to create reciprocal public discourse. The article goes on to create a kind of spatial mapping of the media-studies by creating a grid system where the x-axis goes from critical to affirmative, while the y-axis goes from diversity to pluralism. Thus, creating four distinct zones from where it argues (at least most) studies stand in their view on media. Those viewpoints are: critical diversity, where media is viewed as a cultural machinery, or industry. Affirmative diversity, where media is portrayed as being the mirror of society (in other words; part of the marketplace of ideas). Affirmative pluralism, the view that media is a kind of public forum where things can be represented (in other words; building public consensus). And, lastly, critical pluralism, which views media as the focal point in the battle for a more just society. The article also points out that according to their findings the Liberal-aggregative view has been (or, very possibly, still is) the most prevalent view in contemporary society, while maintaining that only the critical pluralism holds the sufficient means to handle what contemporary society expects and needs. What those needs and expectations are, however, remains obscure .

The framework suggested by this author helps in the understanding of democracy, illustrating, illustrated through a grid, the relations of different, but common viewpoints in media-studies – which in itself already paints a picture of what media is in a democratic setting. The article clearly shows how, in democratic societies, institutions are at least partially based on values and views. It tells a story about how realism and idealism meet in democracy.

"A step away from complacent knowing": Reinvigorating democracy through the humanities (McTighe, 2015), and is an attempt to underline importance of humanities in a democracy, in an age of (arguably) declining support for the humanities. The author points to a book, written in 2012, called *A Crucible Moment,* and picks from therein four assets. These assets are "a framework for twenty-first-century civic learning and democratic engagement" (2012). The assets are; knowledge, skills, values, and collective action. All of which, are tenets included in humanities and education. From there the author moves on to a model for improving education. The suggested improvement is an idea of having a more 'civic-minded campus'; a way of teaching students to live a more democratic life during, and after education. Four specific aspects stand out in her explanation.

1. Civic ethos, a matter concerned with governance of campus life (with the notion of empowering thoughts concerning governance outside of campus as well).

2. Civic literacy, which seems to mean essentially critically analytical skills as a goal for every student – so as to have the ability to deliberate essential information from disinformation.

3. Civic inquiry, how things you learn apply to and in the 'real world', suggested by the author to be integrated into majors and general education.

4. civic action, which simply put means what you as a citizen can do in practice to change the civic landscape.

This article reminds us how one of the cornerstones of democracies are the humanities, through which we view our civic landscape, and form the understanding of what the civic life is in practice. In doing so, it underlines the importance of education, as that

seems to be one, if not the most, effective tool for massive scale equality that we have found.

In *Electoral Authoritarianism and Human Development* (Miller, 2015), (Name) Miller compares democratically and autocratically governed countries in order to put to test whether or not the theory that democracy makes for a more egalitarian and just society. "[...] Extensive literature has focused on democracy as synonymous with political accountability and, in turn, social welfare provision." (2015) The author argues that this binary system (autocracy is bad, while democracy is good), which we hold on to, doesn't hold up on further inspection. He points to some historical examples (e.g. Bismarcks proto-welfare Prussia in the 19th-century, the Asian Tigers, and the Eastern European Communist regimes) which invested in the wellfare of its citizen. The author points out that roughly two out of three of first adoptions of old age, disability, and health insurance-policies have occured under authoritarian governments. The author also looks at studies which compare authoritarian, elected authoritarian, and democratic governments to each other. Reaching the conclusion that elected authoritarian governments, in fact, do better than closed autocracies in multiple fields, such as; healthcare, education, and civil liberties. From here, he argues that it may indeed be the case that it might not always be the best option for a country to adopt completely democratic governments as soon as possible, but to move into a more democratic sollution gradually. As it seems to hold that democracy is still a net positive for citizen wellfare, even when not fully applied. In conclusion the author suggests that further research into the subject-matter would be conducted outside the dichotomy of democracy vs. Autocracy. The author suggests this as he believes that the lumping in of all autocracies under the same roof risks overlooking some major variation of applied sollutions, which might be beneficial to learn about.

This article shows that democracy is to address the need of the people, and to compromise. Which can then lead to a decrease in the effectiveness of implementation–which this article seems to portray might be a disadvantage in comparison to certain autocratic instances.

Electoral systems, ethnic cleavages and experience with democracy (Huelshoff et al. 2015), is concerned with problematizing what creates cleavages in political parties. It argues that one of the more popular notions as the main propellant of cleavages in

political party systems is the problems in the country, and how those in power have handled themselves in regards to those issues. It suggests that "[...] party system fragmentation is determined by an interaction between electoral institutions and social cleavages", but the article suggests, instead, that the problem may be more complex than first thought.

The idea the authors present is that the experience the citizen have had on voting may have a major impact on how people vote. The authors seems to have reached the conclusion by looking at some of the emerging democracies of the world. In many places, it seems, that the volatile nature of the political landscape, and general lack of institutionalisation lowers the ability of the citizen to make votes they feel confident will have the impact they hope it will have. While in more established democracies where the institutions are less volatile, and more set in place, people feel much more confident they know what they're getting for their vote. Finally suggesting that the primary implication of the study conducted, as well as the subsequent analysis, is that several elections need to take place before the general population feels secure in their (sufficient) understanding of the political atmosphere.

This article relates to the understanding of democracy, as it portraits an intricate picture of how the minds of citizen work in particular areas of democracy (in this case in voting), suggesting, once more, that we may have an insufficient view of how things work, as well as serving as a reminder of the progressive nature of democracy.

Non-participation in digital media: toward a framework of mediated political action (Casemajor et al. 2015), sets out to challenge the view of digital non-participation as a form of mere passivity. It proposes that (at least partially) non-participation in digital forms of political activity can be seen as an actively opposing stance towards the increasing amounts of, among other things; surveillance, and other disempowering forms of interaction.

The authors propose four categories of digital participation; *active participation, passive participation, active non-participation, and Passive non-participation.* What active participation means is to intentionally take advantage of the means available in the civic life (e.g. issuing blog posts about political topics, commenting on news articles with the intent to improve society - however limited the scope might be). What passive participation means, here, is characterized by the taking part of the means available in

civic life, without the intent of furthering society (e.g. reading about news articles). Active non-participation, on the other hand, is to intentionally withhold yourself from engaging in digital democratic means available in the civic life (e.g. not going online, even though you could – in order to prove a point). Last, but not least, passive non-participation, which is essentially the inability to participate, or the lack of interest to participate (e.g. not being able to afford means of connecting to the internet). In conclusion the authors of the article discuss concerns about how the lack of participation, active or passive, may lead to us being worse of. Continuing then to also see potential in resistance– as a form of opposition towards unfettered and poorly thought out progress - through non-participation.

The article relates to the understanding of digital democracy in that it draws up a potential outline for viewing different forms of participation within the confines of digital communication – with potential ramifications of a broader kind, if applied to views on participation in general.

India and Democracy Promotion: Cautious Approach and Opportunity (Choedon, 2015), show both how India has taken a different route (in comparison with the west) in its promotion of democracy. As well as comparing said route with the route taken by western democracies, which, it argues, is one of favouring the active exporting of democracy. Whereas India has decided, instead, to opt for a buy-in method. Which is to say that India has a had a (fairly strict) policy of non-intervention, unless specifically asked for by the country in question – which seems to have been a fairly common incident as many developing countries have cooperated with India. To understand why India has taken this this route less travelled the author suggests that we take a historical glance at India's past. When India joined the league of other democratic countries it did so in order to appease other (mainly the US) democratic countries, rather than embracing democracy for any intrinsic value it may hold. Choedon also suggests that India can, in this way, facilitate a more efficient method of trade promotion, increase its investment opportunities, aswell as ensure a steady supply of energy, and other strategic supplies, and interests it may need to bargain for.

This comparison underlines the importance of seeing the multiplicity in the application of the democratic spirit. It shows the importance to see, and accept different approaches democracy – in this case in foreign relations. It also illuminates the possibility that perhaps we (the West) are not in the right in (aggressively) promoting democracy – but

rather to do as we insist is right, while letting others make up their own mind based on what they can see.

Technologies of participation: Community news and social media in Northern Sweden (Carlsson et al. 2015), suggests that the intersection of journalism and social media, which likely means authors with training in the area (e.g. journalists) vs untrained authors (citizen journalists), creates differentiating concepts of participation. It does this through interviews with media professionals (within the confines of northern Sweden). The study concludes that they found, in the interviews, that media professionals had scattered views on the subject, but nevertheless come to the conclusion that there are three key themes to be found; participation as a form of marketing, participation and production, aswell as democratic participation. They also argue that in the digital age journalists have not so much lost their importance, as had been feared by some, but that they have, instead, cemented their position as professionals, and experts in the field. They move on to point out that they've found that even though there seems to be a prevalent fear among journalists that social media may not be the anticipated, and valuable tool it was first prophesized to be – many do not hold this position as avidly as was expected. Opting instead to view the burgeoning digital sphere of media as a potentially positive tool, with its own set of challenges, which many seem more than willing to tackle head on.

"The integration between social media and everyday journalistic work was not only believed to make itpossible for ordinary people to become more engaged in journalism, but they also thoughtof this integration as something that it was necessary for media organisations to adapt to,economically, culturally and politically." (Carlson et al. 2015).

This article relates mainly to what digital democracy is, in that it discusses what *is* happening in the digital age, or at the very least recounts the stories of those living, and working in, and on the digital information sphere. This starts to create a topography of how people perceive the communication marketplace, in this case only locally (in northern Sweden), and from the perspective of those who are professionally trained, and engaged in work in the machinery of media, but a start nevertheless.

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3 CONCLUSION: DEMOCRACY AND CHANGE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Even from the relatively small sample of articles I have discussed here, it seems clear that the notion of democracy refers to a form of government that is continuously evolving. The core of which seems to rely on the ideal notion of each citizen being equal to another - with emphasize on ideal. What equal means seems more than difficult to pin down to anything very specific, or very concrete. In fact, it seems to me that it is more of an end than a mean. It surfaces in many aspects of the civic life, but I feel it is mainly summed up in these three aspects: The expectation of all citizen to be on (approximately) the same level of understanding of the civic life (mainly through education, and journalism), which affords; equality in power (one issue; one person, one vote). As well as in the freedom of expression. It seems to me that democracy is, essentially, a equal opportunity organism. I say organism, rather than machine (or something else), to emphasize the fact that it seems to be in a constant state of growth - part of the reason why it is hard to pin down to anything concrete, and definitive. The other being the slippery nature of language - e.g. when I say equality to someone we can assume that we are in agreement of what it means, but in reality we probably don't agree fully, due to other perceived notions interfering with this notion.

Concerning the comparison of Dahlberg and the other authors included in this comparative study, I find that Dahlberg seems to be in agreement with most of the other authors; except, perhaps, for the articles written by by Seaga, and Choedon, as these two articles seem to represent what Dahlberg (2001b) refers to as the communitarian view of the civic life. Which seems to me to be a step outside the normative western narrative of democratic rhetoric, at least in some sense.

What I have concluded about Digital democracy is, is that it seems to be mainly about digital communication - as a tool for democracy, and the wide array of issues which it builds on, creates or replaces, and in itself is. Like democracy, it too, is similar to an organism in that it is a process of reciprocity - maintained by, and for the citizen of not only at a state level, but also on a global level. I think, therefore, we would all do so well as to remember the importance of a conscious development of the means of

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communication which foster the normative public sphere. Arguably, at least, this would foster a more fair, and democratic discourse. As society, in this day and age, relies on the internet for its communication needs it has begun to have some fairly hefty repercussions on the 'real' world. Bringing together, and separating people through (more or less niche) interest groups. What makes it democratic, rather than something else, is that it seems to exponentially broaden the potential for the freedom of expression, as well as opening up pretty much the entirety of human knowledge for study.

So, what I am left with after reading, and analyzing these articles is that I find myself agreeing with Dahlberg in his pursuit for a push towards a more maintained enviroment of discoursive freedom. If for no other reason, then at least to uphold the democratic ideal of an educated and rationally capable citizen - which arguably could be afforded by the internet. In this day and age many things seem to threaten the hegemony of free discourse on the internet. As to whether or not this is reason for pessimism, or optimism; it seems to me that there is reason to hold either way. There are absolutely problematic aspects to digital democracy, but on the whole it seems to me like there are far more potential benefits to be gained than there are problems. Some of the problems I have mentioned in this study, like corporate interests (Dahlberg, 2005b), or ideological views (Seaga, 2009) which streamline the discourse into a dominant model, thereby endangering, at least, minority discourses. Other aspects, such as privacy, I've only touched very lightly, as I did not come across much research into the area. This area, in particular, is a topic on which I think it would be important that research was conducted on, as well as the previously mentioned problem areas.

I also think that the seemingly right way to go about things in this would be to set some form of (more or less) universally applied laws to safe-guard the free speech, which the internet fosters. But, how this should be applied, what it ought to include, as well as disclude, should be the focus of future research. As well as calling for the above mentioned I also think there needs to be more research conducted towards an increased understanding of why it is important to pursue a more just public sphere, as opposed to a more profitable one.

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