

Chapter 6

Artificial Intelligence and the Advancement of Civic and Political Engagement: Opportunities and Challenges for Democracy

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will first emphasize the critical need for active political and civic engagement in maintaining democracy's enduring vitality. The author analyzes the evolution of citizen participation over time, especially with the proliferation of the internet and the prevalence of social media, which have altered individual engagement in the digital era. This chapter will examine how artificial intelligence has expanded the opportunities for public participation and the possible advantages this entails. However, it will also address significant concerns about the potential use of AI by governments with authoritarian tendencies. The author examines how new technologies may jeopardize human liberties, distort election processes—even in stable democracies—and raise concerns over the future erosion of democratic systems.

INTRODUCTION

Despite decades of heated debate, no commonly accepted accurate definition of artificial intelligence (AI) exists. Overall, the developed definitions are either too wide or too narrow. While some feel AI has the ability to save lives, others believe

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it is a forerunner to disaster. Both extreme ways fail to take into account the varied and intricate nature of these ideas, preventing a fair and accurate appraisal. In reality, many of the other concepts I'll examine in this section, such as political involvement, digital citizenship, and democracy, lack clear and unequivocal bounds. When examining the always changing social, cultural, and technological contexts, it is critical to have a good understanding of the dynamic nature of these concepts. Different cultures and groups use and interpret these principles in various ways, reflecting the breadth of their applications and interpretations. The meaning and function of these concepts are constantly evolving as a result of technological advancements. On the one hand, this ambiguity encourages an unduly positive perspective of technology, portraying it as a savior, but on the other, it constitutes a threat, potentially leading to terrible outcomes.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these uncertainties, AI is having an increasingly significant impact on society today, and it is abundantly obvious that it is bringing about transformation in a variety of domains. It is becoming increasingly widespread in a variety of domains, including agriculture, education, health, and the economy, with the goal of optimizing processes and outcomes in these areas. AI, in particular, has the potential to improve economic decision-making processes by accelerating financial assessments. Similarly, it has the potential to improve student success in the field of education by providing individualized learning experiences. AI is improving the quality of healthcare services by facilitating early diagnosis and treatment procedures. It improves farmers' planning chances in agriculture by evaluating data pertaining to crops and weather. However, AI's influence extends beyond these specific fields and significantly influences ongoing political processes. The participation of individuals in a variety of governance processes, the structure of democratic representation, and the mechanisms for shaping public opinion have all begun to undergo transformations as a result of the introduction of AI. It is possible that AI applications could promote democracy by increasing citizens' political and civic participation. Particularly, there is a growing anticipation that AI will enhance democratic involvement, ensure social equity, and aid individuals in voicing their opinions. On the other hand, AI also presents new dangers that have the potential to disrupt democratic processes. AI poses a risk of becoming a weapon that supports authoritarian inclinations, particularly in developing democracies where democratic principles are not completely ingrained and authoritarian impulses are strong. This risk is especially prevalent in countries where authoritarian tendencies are strong.

In this section, I will attempt to examine the potential opportunities and hazards that are associated with the discussion of subjects such as AI, political participation, digital citizenship, and digital democracy. I will do this by analyzing the impact that AI has on citizens' social and political engagement. In this section, I will concentrate on the criticisms that bring to light particularly unfavorable scenarios, such as the

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