

The Real Political Power of the  
Internet:  
Facebook, a Possible New Hub of  
European Elections?

Marta MARCHEVA  
IFP / CARISM  
Université Panthéon-Assas Paris 2  
12, Place Panthéon  
75005 Paris  
*[martamarcheva@gmail.com](mailto:martamarcheva@gmail.com)*

The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub  
of European Elections?

# The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub of European Elections?

**Keywords** : E-Governance, E-Campaigning, Facebook, Internet  
Citizens Political engagement

Marta MARCHEVA

## **Introduction**

Political communication changed significantly during the 20th century. Two important transformations for political parties and candidates were the decline in voter partisanship accompanied by the increasing dependence on media in communication of campaign messages to the audience. Today, media fulfils a filter function between political actors and the public in modern campaigns and this editorial selection process usually follows commercialized media logic which has been especially difficult for certain, mostly outsider, political actors. Small parties and their candidates often fail to break the news monopoly and lack financial resources to attain public awareness through other channels, for example via paid TV advertising.

The increase of ICTs and the Internet in particular, has totally transformed the traditional interactions between politicians, voters and media. This paper will first raise a debate on the role of Internet in the public sphere. A number of important theorists have argued in favour of Internet as an important tool in furthering and supporting democracy and participation in the public sphere. In the tradition of cultural and political studies, which are exploring in particular the cultural production as a form of political participation, the paper aims to analyze the relationship between Internet, online networks and collective mobilisation.

This paper will decrypt the challenges and opportunities that open Facebook to managers and PR's of European campaigns, but also the limits of these new digital practices regarding the European Governance. It aims to analyze, within the framework of the 2009's European elections, the perception of the feeling of belonging, the collective representation of the Self and the Nation, as well as the cultural specific practices. Some of the major contributions of Facebook in the virtual landscape concerning the European elections and the future of

### The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub of European Elections?

the European governance raise the central question of the role Internet plays in imagining and mobilizing new types of citizen's communities, and their participation in the context of globalization and cultural diversity.

In this context we are exploring the E-democracy instruments used during the last European elections in 27 countries in June 2009. The first part of this work provides a brief summary of the main assumptions about European governance and political communication, and their reorganization in the virtual space. We will assess the role that ICT's play in the lives of European citizens, especially French and Bulgarians, and political groups and we will draw a brief historical and political overview of the European Union in order to better understand the spirit in which the sense of belonging to the European community has changed in recent years. We will finally point some of the major contributions of Facebook in the virtual landscape concerning the European elections and the future of the European governance.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In order to clear concepts like international structure of political communication, political theories of communication, relationship between the public and private broadcasting sectors, cross-national comparative studies, political impact of the media, impact of technology and technological change on politics, values and cognition, and models of diplomatic communication, my research on E-Governance is based on four concepts: globalization, ICTs, political communication patterns and online communities networks.

Firstly, globalization is seen as a factor for restructuring of societies, interests, coalitions, state representatives behavior, party structures at all the possible levels of political and economic organization—local, regional, national, transnational, multilateral, global and glocal. Globalization, as a factor of growth, contributes to changes in major issues relative to

Marta MARCHEVA

political elections and the growing professionalization of online campaigns.

In the other hand, the increase of ICTs and the Internet in particular, has totally transformed the traditional forms of interactions between politicians, voters and media. Among the large number of theorists who have argued in favor of Internet as an important tool in supporting democracy and participation in the public sphere, Negroponete (1995) and Rash (1997) were the first to argue that the Internet offered the potential for a renewal of direct democracy.

In addition, although all political actors are using Internet in order to expand their audiences through websites and social networks, not all of them could be interpreted as 'new' and ICT-driven. It might equally be argued that new media is exacerbating pre-existing political party and media trends in western democracies which fail to engage ordinary citizens even if Internet now enabled them to spend hours, rather than days, in researching topics for political and policy debates (Davis, 2009).

Lastly, as Manuel Castells observed, the network has become the dominant organizing logic of society and has transformed our homes into overconnected spaces for communication, interaction, and information exchange. The conventional, stratified structure of governance is substituted by the complex and elaborate architecture of the global economy. And the omnipresence of mobile media devices and networked infrastructure has replaced the archaic structure of the city with a large network of cables and telecommunication lines.

### **Methodology**

Our research is based in particular, on extensive field survey exploring the European citizens uses on Facebook during the last European electoral campaign. Because of the very recent nature of the phenomenon, our methodology has consisted, in the observation of Bulgarian and French users in

### The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub of European Elections?

particular, participation in groups and forums related to the elections on Facebook and analysis of discourses produced online at this web site. Our research was conducted between April 1st and June 30th 2009 through some of the biggest Bulgarian and French groups on Facebook, and the biggest three groups dedicated to the EU Elections: "Voter Registration Campaign for European Elections 2009" (5 600 members), "Elections européennes 2009/European elections 2009" (2 492 members), "I will vote in the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections" (2 477 members). Our research aims to decrypt the challenges and opportunities that open Facebook to managers and PR's of European campaigns, but also the limits of these new digital practices regarding the European Governance. It aims to analyze, within the framework of the 2009's European elections, the perception of the feeling of belonging, the collective representation of the Self and the Nation, as well as the cultural specific practices.

### **Political context in Europe**

Today's Europe is confronted with major challenges: effects of globalisation, emergence of newly industrialised and highly competitive countries, new demographic trends, with an ageing population and an increasing need of immigrant labour, fast technological developments, and severe economic and financial crisis. From political point of view, the European Union is weakened after French, Nederland and Irish "No" vote to the European Constitution.

During the campaign, the European Commission's goal number one was to convince young people to say "No" to abstinence. That's how some EU communication experts has collaborated with MTV to launch an EU-wide campaign similar to the music channel's famous "Rock the Vote" initiative in the US to urge youngsters to take part in the elections. Moreover, a series of TV spots running were started out on the network's various European stations as well as an interactive website and advertising in EU national capitals. In this respect, the European Parliament and the groups and members sitting in it

Marta MARCHEVA

enjoy a significant advantage: a majority of Europeans, and an even more important majority of young Europeans, consider that the European Parliament 'should have the greatest decision-making power within the European Union' (47%), that it is 'democratic' (69%) and that it has a positive or a neutral image (80% and even 85% for 15–24 year olds).<sup>1</sup>

As soon as there are no official European media and the European public space is still under construction, national media are still learning how to talk about Europe and how to facilitate a better understanding of the European governance system. In the same time, they are able to take into account the specific political culture of each country, which reshapes the vision and the understanding of the European system in general and of the European Parliament in particular. We will see later, that Facebook gives the opportunity to bypass the compelling national background and to bring the debate immediately on European level.

France is one of the oldest member states of the European Union. Due to the recent entry of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the number of seats allocated to France was revised from 78 seats to 72 seats, with a loss of 6 seats. France now represents only 9.8% of all European MEPs compared to 12.5% in 2004 and 19.8% in 1979, following the very first European election. The turnout in European elections in France has almost always declined, with just one exception of an increase in 1994, falling from 60.71% turnout in the 1979 election to 42.76% in 2004 and to 40.63% in 2009.

The first European Parliament election of 2009 in Bulgaria was held on Sunday 7 June 2009. After the Treaty of Nice - that became active in November 2004 - the number of Bulgarian delegates in the European Parliament decreased from 18 (in 2007) to 17 delegates. Bulgaria's opposition centre-right party has narrowly won the country's first European Parliament elections. Official results show the "Citizens for

---

<sup>1</sup> Gallup Europe (2008a) The European Parliament. Special EB 288, fieldwork September/November 2007, report March 2008

The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub  
of European Elections?

European Development in Bulgaria” Party (GERB) took just over 21.5%, with Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev’s Socialist Party just 0.3 percentage points behind.

Bulgarian voter turnout in the European elections is not likely to vary widely from the 34 % average score for the EU. With 38.99% of participation, Bulgarian voters showed a heightened interest in the 2009 European Parliament elections compared to the first elections in 2007, when just 29.22 % of Bulgarians went to the polls. Bulgarian voter turnout was expected to be even higher this time, mostly because unlike the first voting, which was for complementary elections, the 2009 voting was for the first regular European elections in which Bulgarian voters can participate. Although Bulgarians now feel far more European citizens than in 2007 and are starting to realise the significance of their vote for the future of a United Europe, some problems persist due to insufficient information about the work of the EU institutions in Bulgaria, about the issues discussed there and their direct importance for each Bulgarian citizen. Bulgarian nationals abroad are also entitled to vote for members of the European Parliament. 52 polling stations have been established at the Bulgarian diplomatic and consular missions in 30 countries. Bulgarian citizens, who are eligible voters and who have a permanent and current address within the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria or a residence address in another Member State of the European Union for at least 60 days of the last three months before 7 June 2009, have exercised their voting rights there.

An important feature of the European elections in Bulgaria is that in less than a month they were followed by national parliamentary elections, which are usually involving a much higher interest. Experts report that European elections in Bulgaria act like a “dress rehearsal” for the real competition for the national parliament that took place early on July 2009. Therefore, the political parties were doing their maximum to mobilise the largest possible part of their electorate in order to gain at the European elections, and to try to inevitably raise voter participation. That’s how, national and European



Marta MARCHEVA

messages in the campaigns were mixed up for Bulgarian voters who are now used to make their European choice on the basis of the candidates' positions on domestic issues. Thus, despite the gradual belonging to the European community for Bulgarian citizens, they have arguably not yet started to perceive the problems of the EU as their own, and continue to vote driven by domestic strategies.

As this is the case for the national and local level, recently an important increase of deliberative experiments is observable, financed in large part by the European Commission, essentially through its plan D, inviting lay citizens to debate European issues. An example of initiative is the European Citizens Consultation project that allowed more than 100 000 EU citizens online and more than 1 500 citizens face-to-face to debate about the economic and social future of Europe through 27 national consultations. Those initiatives for public participation have in common the will to better explore the priorities and preferences of European citizens, to reconnect them with the rather elite-driven political sphere in Brussels and, more ambitiously, to involve lay citizens in the EU decision-making process.

### **Digital engagements between politicians and citizens**

Considering both the goals of political actors and the specific features of the Internet, Gibson and Ward (2000) perceive five functions to be central to the use of websites for political purposes. Firstly there is the information provision, which is enhanced through the volume and speed of data transmission online. Second, the internet provides campaigning activities with the added value of multimedia, interactivity and control of information. Third, resource generation is facilitated through the interactive features of the web, thus enabling immediate transactions and recruitment via email. Fourth, networking online is made easy by the hyperlink system inherent in the technology. Finally, citizen participation could be eased through interactive feedback functions and discussion

The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub  
of European Elections?

boards. Thus, the following four practices are central to web campaigning: informing, involving, connecting and mobilizing

The electoral campaign focuses the expectations and hopes of all publics and reveals the complexity of the political communication that ensures the smooth flow of messages across different media filters. Today, one significant fact is that participation to the European Parliament elections has been decreasing in most EU countries since the first time the Parliament was elected directly in 1979. In the context of economic crisis elsewhere in Europe, for example, only 19,64% of Slovakian and 24,53% of Polish voters went to the voting booths in June 2009. During the last decades, the public at the political periphery is being further distanced from the political centre. In part, this is linked to the lack of transparency and political results and to the following decline in mass media coverage of institutional politics which has been transferred to online platforms. Partly it is also a consequence of the daily ICT uses and practices of those engaged within, or close to, the political centre. The complexities of policy decisions in the European Union and program delivery sometimes motivate public authorities to seek more citizen involvement. Particularly at the local level, citizens often have a special commitment to and knowledge of place, as well as social networks that can be mobilized for public decisions and actions that will lead to improved public policy outcomes ( Bowles and Gintis 2000 ).

However, the proliferation of new media sites is not proved yet to be useful for re-engaging the mass of citizens who have turned away from party and state politics and Internet use by ordinary citizens is still remaining consumer and leisure, rather than politically, oriented. Indeed, according to Sunstein (2001) the Internet encourages individuals to pick and choose online content in a way that reduces or avoid engagement with alternative viewpoints and undermines shared public sites containing mixed opinions. In consequence, we observe the development of well-organized 'smart mobs' and polarized, fragmented interest group ghettos (Rheingold, 2002). All those elements suggest that the Internet is neither enlarging nor deepening political participation nor engagement between

Marta MARCHEVA

citizens and political actors. Because the majority of citizens in stable democracies only seek to be minimally informed of, or engage with, institutional politics, new media's impact and 'soft' forms of deliberation need now to be included.

Computer-enhanced politics may be improving democratic engagement at the centre but, at this stage, are unlikely to be offering a solution to wider patterns of public disengagement from institutional politics (Davis, 2009) In fact, for many scholars, the audience had neither the expertise nor interest to participate in the majority of policy processes and outcomes. Thus, without any doubt, institutional ICT adoption has been more about organization and consultation purposes with those they already engaged with, about managerial control and cost reduction than widening participation and involvement. This fact reveals a continuing descending trends in pressure to cut costs, recycling of news content and multi-tasking, and the advancement of 'infotainment' at the place of 'hard' news coverage. According to several US studies (Cohen, 2002; Scott, 2005) the Internet's arrival has further destabilized the basic business media model which was lying down on a small number of news producers and fixed advertising.

Thus, nowadays, early and overall enthusiasm is replaced by more sober or pessimistic estimations of the Internet's power for reconnecting political elites to citizens. Politicians, parties and government institutions have been slow to adopt online deliberative tools. Instead, new media is more likely to be viewed as an alternative tool for political organization or service delivery, or be used as an additional one-to-many promotional medium (Jackson, 2003; Chadwick, 2006).

Online exchanges and communicative deliberative spaces, developing around the political centre, could be insular and exclusionary. In other words, politics, for those already engaged or interested, is becoming denser, wider, and possibly more pluralistic and inclusive (Davis, 2009). But, at the same time, the mass of unengaged citizens is being subject to greater communicative exclusion and experiencing increasing

#### The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub of European Elections?

disengagement. Those trends are contradicted by the rise of online social communities' networks which are theoretically able to fill the gap.

The very determinant role of Web 2.0 has consisted in the increasing of proximity and accessibility of users in political life and has contributed to an expansion of politically significant information, offering what traditional institutions and news media could not. In this context, online social networks have eliminated the traditional barriers between those in power and their audiences, and have introduced new approaches of engagement and political involvement. The rise of communities' cyber networks has opened up new possibilities for public monitoring and engagement by revolutionizing the communication and the way we share with friends, communities, political institutions, and the physical environment.

Thus, unlike in France, the European Parliament elections were the first virtual elections in Bulgaria. The political forces concentrate above all in the social networks and the Internet sites and blogs, rather than in the country's streets and squares. A group of young active Internet users was organised behind each political party, and they were taking care of the best presentation and image of their candidates. By this campaign tool, parties seek to attract apolitical voters and to win over the decisive "undecided".

#### **Facebook, a possible hub for E-Governance**

The "profile" of Facebook is the place where users can create a digital representation of themselves. Furthermore, Facebook users can post pictures of themselves and their friends, to join and form groups with others who share similar interests and beliefs. Two important tools offer the opportunity to meet and socialize with strangers, to meet each other around an event or to share an experience and display their preferences. On one side there are the "groups", public or private, open or closed, which administrators can reach all

Marta MARCHEVA

members with collective messages. On the other hand, the "events", allowing members to invite other users to participate in activities such as parties or meetings. Facebook's interface is both visual and selective, some choices are inevitable, while others are not available. Navigation is very easy and users are able to provide a variable number of feedback and responses in the different categories of Facebook.

Although every candidate is allowed to create an "application", a group or an event, not everyone has the motivation or the training to do so. To be a content creator, it is better for the political actor to be active and knowledgeable. This allows a model of political and personal candidate identity to spread on Facebook. Politicians who are popular on this site are not necessarily the most interesting or prestigious but those who invest their time intensively online and are skilled in the selection and the use of accessories. As in real face-to-face, some actors have more power or influence than others, but on the territory of Facebook, a new hierarchy of criteria appears. This does not mean that everything is radically different from normal life, on the contrary, in a digital world where the landmarks are more and more confusing, Facebook rivals the complexity and nuances of offline life.

Facebook, as the ultimate transnational community site, allowing its members to connect, swap and share 24 hours on 24, seven days a week, has become the brand new hub of the latest media elections campaign in the United States. Facebook is considered already as a generational transformation of American politics and it's about to transform the way campaigns are run. The Obama's and Clinton's teams have cleverly taken advantage of the many opportunities and facilities offered by Facebook in terms of modern political communication and recruitment of voters online. Barack Obama in particular, has made public participation, transparency, and civic engagement through online initiatives a central approach of his administration's approach to governance. In the US, Facebook's administrators have organized several workshops aiming to show campaign staff and consultants how to leverage Facebook as part of a campaign strategy, explaining that of 45

The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub  
of European Elections?

million active Facebook users, 80 percent are of voting age. For example Obama's biggest Facebook supporters' group, "One Million Strong for Barack Obama" had over 320 000 members (as opposed to Hillary Clinton's "One Million Strong for Hillary Clinton," with 5 300).

With more than 175 million active members, Facebook is the sixth website with more traffic in the world. In June 2007, Facebook experienced a record annual increase of 270% of connections in one year (Source: comScore World Metrix). More than 65 translations of the site are available to date, including the Bulgarian version, which will soon be supplemented by 30 new translations.

All that is required to register on Facebook is a valid email address. Once registered, users can join networks that relate to their real life and establish links with communities to better know people who work and live around them. So, this site, deeply internationalized, is built around a technology that reflects the social interactions that people have in the real world, but with the possibility in addition, to improve the ability to communicate effectively with others.

In a context of low voting participation in Europe, Facebook is acting like a vehicle for reaching voters especially those belonging to the social-network generation. The Facebook's applications are providing the semblance, when not the reality, of personal involvement and a forum for discussion. In order to recruit voters online, institutions, candidates and pressure groups must follow some online rules and appear to engage with potential supporters on a far more personal level. From the voter's point of view, far from being a one-way broadcast, Facebook as medium, allows people to engage with each other, get involved and focus on the issues they care about most. Moreover, Facebook offer an arena where virtual social groups identify their problems, express their demands and formalize their interest on the European community issues. In sum, it's involved in transforming specific concerns into public topics and in including them on the top of the policy

Marta MARCHEVA

agenda. Besides, the online social networks can promote activities that go beyond the single online participation and enroll directly in the register of real social movements and concrete voting process.

Anderson point out the dual nature of the Internet: on the one hand it is a heterogeneous electronic media, with hardly perceptible contours and in constant development, on the other hand, a media production of "imagined communities" without geographical or legal legitimacy, whose members will probably never cross "while, in the minds of everyone, lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 2002). Unlike "real" communities, where people have physical interactions, in the imagined European community, individuals do not have a face-to-face communication and daily contact, but they feel however a strong emotional attachment to Europe.

Studies on the implementation of e-campaigns and e-voting in different European countries, shows that the Internet is often associated with the professionalization, diversification and increased inclusiveness in the voting process as well as the electoral campaigns. New troubles related to exclusion, trustworthiness and identity in campaign involve issues of targeting, personalization, complexity and negative campaigning. Those issues encourage scientific analysis and discussion of the political aspects of communication within states, preferably in a comparative framework, and across national boundaries in order to develop and facilitate interaction among scholars. But while networked technologies enable public participation and mobilization on a way not possible in the pre-digital era, they are as well source of tensions and conflicts with potentially devastating consequences, undesirable effects and unexpected outcomes which are challenging traditional models of power and control and reinforcing new ones. Thus, the same technologies could establish spaces for public and networked engagement and may allow citizens to organize social gatherings or political protests and sometimes to even coordinate terrorist attacks. The proliferation of citizen journalism websites and user-generated online forums through the global network has made new media-based organizations

### The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub of European Elections?

increasingly efficient on content creation and propaganda. More generally, there appear to be several aspects of the Internet which may actually block the public sphere ideals of democratic participation and engagement just like the recent uses of Twitter, YouTube, Facebook by political activists in Moldova and other social networking technologies to stage public protests and storm government office buildings.

In this context, European Parliament presence on Internet and the online exposing its strategies of public policies, law-making processes, political institutions and actors, has led to the ongoing building of an original model of governance that could be now assessed and compared with other regional strategies like the US one. The impact of recent European enlargement on member states and their networked citizens, is letting emerge new forms of governance (including political E-participation, E-deliberation, E-delegation, E-decision-making, E-evaluation) and the building of an original World model of governance.

### **Conclusion**

Putting the results of our analysis together, the following conclusions must be put forward. Political Parties in their majority, possess their Facebook page or group, in which "Wall", citizens and "Fans" are actively participating with critics, advices or just support. On the other hand, citizens have created a large number of various Facebook tools on European Community's issues and in particular related to the June 2009 European vote. In the framework of the last European Elections, Facebook offers five significant features.

Firstly Facebook is very modern and "hot" instrument for E-campaigning. Secondly, it's some how trendy to navigate on political applications on Facebook, to discuss there on political topics and to declare that one is going to vote. Thus,



Marta MARCHEVA

Facebook's pages related to Europe attract the not militant citizens only with its "trends" and "vogue" effects.

Furthermore, undoubtedly, Facebook is an easy source of practical information replacing sometimes the information functions of the European commission and Parliament and avoiding to some users to go and check directly the Institutions websites.

Besides, Facebook favors plurality of opinions and critics by providing them a real arena for expression. The example of Facebook confirms the premise that, although the Internet provides a transnational space, it does not lead to the convergence of cultures, but highlights the opportunities for diversification and pluralism of habitudes and social affiliations.

Above all, in a context of economic crisis unparalleled elsewhere in Europe, Facebook allows national and European identity building. Acting like a sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist, Facebook enables users to articulate different stories and meanings and to foster a democratic imaginary about past and future. Facebook encourages Europeans not only to reactivate the generational history and to communicate on dispersed records, but also to produce new initiatives aiming at the revival or the creation of collective memories and common European values. Although some users receive henceforth their national identity, as a mixture of different cultures and are trying to rethink and continuously negotiate their cultural practices, often by displaying contradictory feelings, an unexpectedly large proportion of voters identify with an imagined community and are drawing boundaries between what is "European" and what is not. Unless one enters the cyberspace with an ideological commitment to national-building, the very structure of the web tends to subtly but steadily weaken pre-existing nationalist orientations. (Saunders, 2006)

The Real Political Power of the Internet: Facebook, a Possible New Hub of European Elections?

Finally, Facebook displays some significant limits. The noticeable enthusiasm of European users is not an equivalent of a real voting process; it could stay a virtual involvement without the physical action on the day of the European elections. The potential danger of Facebook, from political but also more global point of view, is to mix up cyberspace and reality and to totally disconnect from real life. Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatiality (the conceived, the perceived and the lived spaces) is useful in defining the limits of European identity construction and civic involvement on the internet (Lefebvre, 1991). The conceived and perceived are quite relevant online while "living" there, is, for now, an unrealized goal and the lived experience, like the voting process, is still the exclusive property of real space.

#### REFERENCES

- BOYD D., 2007, Social Network Sites: Public, Private, or What?, *Knowledge Tree* 13.
- CASTELLS M, 2002, *La Galaxie Internet*, Paris, Fayard
- CHADWICK A, 2006, *Internet Politics: States, Citizens and New Communication Technologies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- COHEN E, 2002, Online Journalism as Market-driven Journalism, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, Vol. 46, No 4, 532-48
- DAVIS A., 2009, New Media and Fat Democracy: The Paradox of Online Participation Davis, *New Media Society*, Vol. 11, No 8, 1-19
- DURKHEIM E., 1989, Communauté et société selon Tönnies, *Revue philosophique*, 27, Paris, Editions de minuit, Collection Le sens commun
- JACKSON N, 2003, *Vote Winner or a Nuisance: Email and British MPs Relationships with their Constituents*, Leicester
- LEFEBVRE H., 1991, *The Production of Space*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Marta MARCHEVA

MIKULA M., 2003, Virtual Landscapes of Memory, *Information, Communication & Society*, Vol. 6, No 2, 169–86.

NEGROPONTE N., 1995, *Being Digital*, London: Hodder and Staunton

RASH W., 1997, *Politics on the Net*, New York: W.H. Freeman and Co

RHEINGOLD H., 2002, *Smart Mobs: The Next social revolution*, London: Perseus

ROFE M.W., 2003, I Want to be Global: Theorising the Gentrifying Class as an Emergent elite Global Community, *Urban Studies*, Vol. 40, No12, 2511– 2526.

SASSEN S., 2003, Globalization or Denationalization?, Review of International Political Economy, *Global Media and Communication*, Vol. 10, No 1, 1–22.

SAUNDERS R., 2006, Denationalized digerati in the virtual near abroad: The internet's paradoxical impact on national Identity among minority Russians, *Global Media and Communication*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 43-69

SCOTT B., 2005, A Contemporary History of Digital Journalism, *Television and New Media*, Vol. 6, No 1, 84-126

SUNSTEIN C., 2001, *Republic.Com*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press