One of the most difficult problems facing Western democracy today is the decline in citizens’ political engagement. There are many elements that contribute to this, including fundamental socio-cultural changes. This book summarizes these contexts and situates itself within them, while focusing on the media’s key role in shaping the character of civic engagement. In particular, it examines the new interactive electronic media in terms of their civic potential. Looking at the evolution of the media landscape, the book interrogates key notions such as citizenship, public sphere, agency, identity, deliberation, and practice and offers a multidimensional analytic framework called “civic cultures.” This framework is then applied to several settings, including television, popular culture, journalism, the EU, and global activism, to illuminate the role of the media in deflecting and enhancing political engagement, as well as in contributing to new forms of political involvement and new understandings of what constitutes the political.

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Continued after the Index
Contents

Preface ix

Introduction
  Protean Democracy 2
  The Media Connection 2
  Useful Theories 3
  Democracy and the Media: Three Traditions 4
  The Chapters Ahead 6
  A Note on Terminology 10

1 Democracy in Difficult Times
  Elusive Engagement 12
  Structural Snapshots 13
  Socio-Cultural Turbulence 14
  Civic Regeneration: Two Fronts 26

2 Media Alterations
  The Evolving Media Landscape 35
  The Twilight of Journalism? 41
  Political Communication in Flux 48
  The Late Modern Media: Logics of the Matrix 52

3 Citizens and Agency
  Citizenship: An Expansive Terrain 58
  Becoming Citizens, Doing Citizenship 68
  The Knowledge Problem: Opinions and Experts 76

4 Engagement, Deliberation, and Performance
  Democracy, Engagement, and Passion 80
  Deliberative Democracy – and Its Limits 86
  Civic Agency as Agonistic Performance 97
Contents

5 Civic Cultures: An Analytic Frame
   A Dynamic Circuit 102
   Knowledge: Active Appropriation 102
   Values: Substantive and Procedural 110
   Trust: Optimal and Directed 112
   Spaces: Communicative Access and Contexts of Action 114
   Practices: Embodied Agency and Skills 116
   Identities: Heterogeneity, Empowerment, Community 118
   Civic Cultures, Networks, and the Media Matrix 123

6 Television and Popular Public Spheres
   Television Logic and the Civic Ideal 126
   Popular Engagement: Locating Democracy 136
   Television, Popular Culture, and Civic Culture 141

7 Internet and Civic Potential
   Taking Stock of the Net: Civic Horizons 149
   Public Spheres Online: Social Contexts and Media Logic 159

8 Online Practices and Civic Cultures
   Journalism Transformed – To a Degree 172
   NGOs as Civic EU Networks 181
   Online Activism: Global Horizons 190
   Media Generations 200

References 203
Index 229
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Preface

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