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.

Peter Dahlgren is Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Lund University, Sweden. He has also taught at Stockholm University, as well as at Queens College and Fordham University in New York City, and has been a visiting scholar at several other universities. He is the author of many articles and author or editor of several books, including *Television and the Public Sphere* (1995) and *Young Citizens and New Media: Learning for Democratic Participation* (2007).
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Continued after the Index
Media and Political Engagement

CITIZENS, COMMUNICATION, AND DEMOCRACY

Peter Dahlgren

Lund University
## Contents

**Preface**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protean Democracy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Media Connection</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful Theories</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy and the Media: Three Traditions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chapters Ahead</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note on Terminology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1 Democracy in Difficult Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elusive Engagement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Snapshots</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Cultural Turbulence</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Regeneration: Two Fronts</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2 Media Alterations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Evolving Media Landscape</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twilight of Journalism?</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Communication in Flux</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Late Modern Media: Logics of the Matrix</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3 Citizens and Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship: An Expansive Terrain</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming Citizens, Doing Citizenship</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Knowledge Problem: Opinions and Experts</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4 Engagement, Deliberation, and Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy, Engagement, and Passion</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative Democracy – and Its Limits</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Agency as Agonistic Performance</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Contents

5 Civic Cultures: An Analytic Frame 102
   A Dynamic Circuit 102
   Knowledge: Active Appropriation 108
   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 126
   Television Logic and the Civic Ideal 127
   Popular Engagement: Locating Democracy 136
   Television, Popular Culture, and Civic Culture 141

7 Internet and Civic Potential 149
   Taking Stock of the Net: Civic Horizons 150
   Public Spheres Online: Social Contexts and Media Logic 159

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

References 203
Index 229
Preface

I feel privileged to have access to so many generous and inspiring colleagues, and to be able to encounter them in different contexts; this book has received lots of assistance along the way for which I wish to express my gratitude. Some of this help has been in collective settings for which it becomes impossible to name all names, but my appreciation is in no way diminished.

My institutional home base, Media and Communication Studies at Lund University in Sweden, is a small but highly dynamic unit headed by Gunilla Jarlbro, where the atmosphere of collegial support and solidarity is really terrific. I am grateful to our doctoral students for the climate of constructive critique that they help generate, as well as for specific feedback on texts I have put forward.

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Participation in the Euricom colloquia in Piran, hosted by Slavko Splichal, has offered inspiration in a splendid setting.

The European Network for Doctoral Studies in Communication and Media, which has recently become the Young Scholars Network within...
Preface

the new European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), has in its various guises over the past years offered lively summer encounters. I am most appreciative to the past and present coordinators and participants of these gatherings.

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Karin, Max, and Finn confirm to me that the civic domain is not the only one for meaningful engagement.

Thank you all; the book’s inadequacies are of course all my own invention.

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“Civic identity and net activism: The frame of radical democracy.” In Lincoln Dahlberg and Eugenia Siapera, eds. Radical
Preface


