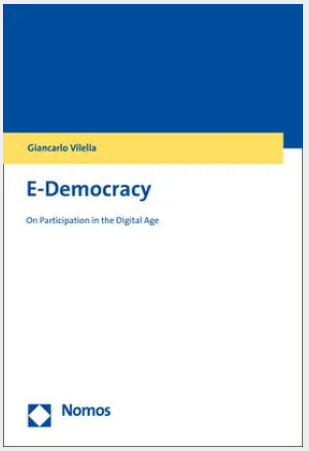
Vilella

E-Democracy

On Participation in the Digital Age



Technology and innovation in general, and IT in particular, are now at the centre of our world, from all points of view, and have an impact on every aspect—economic, legal, political, sociological and cultural—of our society. This new cyberworld has changed our lives in every respect, not least when it comes to democratic participation. The digitisation of every sphere of our lives is sparking a revolution in our societies, which has given rise to a sense of alarm or even doom as regards our freedom. PCs, tablets and smartphones are integral to our lives; we buy online and we participate in debates and events via electronic networks. We are so tied to the use of electronics that one might wonder whether we are heading towards becoming cyber-humans. For example, we have the technical means to carry all of our digital identification details on our bodies, such as microchips under our skin, injected IDs and swallowed passwords: this is not science fiction but reality, albeit not yet used in practice. The key point here is cultural acceptance of this new way of life, which will perhaps impose itself at some point. Futurology or not, the fact is that the Inter-net is an essential part of our lives to the extent that in January 2013, with foresight and courage, Germany's Constitutional Court defined Internet access as a 'public service': an assertion that introduces a new concept in defining this tool more precisely. This book seeks to make it clear that very rapid technological developments have an immediate and strong impact on the democratic system. Politics, legislators and case law are forced to deal with this impact on a daily basis, going down new and unknown paths. Technological innovation has changed and is still changing the relationship between representatives and the people they represent, between the people elected and the people who elect them, and it is now starting to influence the party system as well. So, if we look at its impact on politics, law, culture and the economy, it is easy to see that technological innovation underpins a huge well of power in today's world.

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