News

Call for Chapters: Social Media and Electoral Democracy in Africa | SACOMM

By Martin Ndlela and Winston Mano

August 24, 2018

The new digital environment has ushered social media as an increasingly significant factor in electoral processes across Africa, with Kenya and Zimbabwe as key recent examples. Electoral crises and squabbles between contestants have assumed new dimensions due to the influence of social media. Enhanced sharing and connecting has resulted in new cultures and behaviours involving voters and politicians. Political parties, candidates, 'pundits' and citizens in general have taken to the social media in unprecedented ways to project their voices on key issues of the day. With an increased accessibility of smartphones, even people with limited access to mainstream media have access to social media and can send messages in more real time with new implications for democratization. Social media communications have thus permeated virtually every aspect of the conduct of elections from pre-election to post-election periods. While social media create new opportunities for political campaigns, mobilization, engagement, and participation it also raises questions about the veracity of the information conveyed at speed on Facebook, Tweeter or even Instagram. Social media is crucial for free and fair elections but there are genuine concerns that social media could be manipulated to subvert the electoral system, undermine the integrity of elections and democracy. Those with money can hire automated systems like bots and algorithms are creating new ways of 'disrupting' communication. The digital environment has given rise to more potent forms of fake news, manipulation and below the belt campaigning methods that are having implications for electoral democracy in Africa. In countries such as Uganda, Egypt, Kenya, Mali, and Zimbabwe, authorities' attempts to introduce new laws and regulations have been met with mixed reactions. What are main drives behind social media's role in elections and is it enhancing democratization? Is communicative power at elections altered by social media altering in Africa? Is it levelling the playing field for electoral contestants or just a new nuisance? Why are many Africans joining in its use and with what effect?

This proposed volume seeks to explore the implications of social media use to the electoral processes in Africa. The aim is to increase our understanding of how social media impact elections and democracy. We seek original works which analyze different aspects of social media use in presidential and parliamentary elections.

Potential topics within this volume include:

- Social media and election campaigns
- Political participation and engagement
- Voter mobilization
- Laws and regulation of social media
- The political economy of digital media in Africa
- Social media and empowerment
- Youth participation in electoral processes.

- Gender issues
- Production, dissemination and interpretation of social media messages. – recorded voice messages, video messages, jokes, cartoons
- The role of "opinion shapers"
- Agenda-setting
- Audiences/users of social media
- The role of social media in the framing of narratives.

Challenges

- Manipulation of information
- Spread of disinformation
- Memes and viral election messages
- Fake news
- Hate speech
- Cyberbullies
- Ethical issues

Interested contributors are invited to submit a 500-word proposal and a short biography to the editors by 15 September 2018 to the editors Martin Ndlela, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (martin.ndlela@inn.no) and Winston Mano, University of Westminster, (manow@westminster.ac.uk). Final chapters of approximately 5000-7000 words will be due by 15 November. Please note that all submissions will be peer-reviewed.

View all posts by SACOMM

Source: Call for Chapters: Social Media and Electoral Democracy in Africa | SACOMM