

Democracy in the Digital Communication Environment: A Typology Proposal of Political Monitoring Processes

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The digital environment creates new opportunities for citizen political participation. Among these, the monitoring of political and economic power centers stands out. This includes public scrutiny of the management of public funds and the activities of the public and economic systems, thus denouncing dysfunctional features. This article aims to describe, differentiate, and classify the various forms that monitoring can take in current democracies. The results indicate that three major monitoring fields exist: governmental monitoring, shared monitoring, and civic monitoring. This study focuses on the last by specifying its four types: watchdog function, extraction and filtration of secret information, expansion of issues through alternative journalism, and extension of representation beyond parliaments.

Keywords: monitoring, democracy, online activism, digital environment, journalism, new media

The use of new digital communication tools by activist and civil society groups has led to the emergence and consolidation of new forms of citizen participation. The extraction of secret information from great political powers by organizations such as WikiLeaks, the growing ability to mobilize new social movements organized by such networks as Occupy Wall Street, #Yosoy132, and Movimiento 15-M, the weight of online petitions and votes via digital platforms such as ThePetitionSite, Change.org, and Avaaz.org, and the emergence of alternative voices through alternative media such as Indymedia are increasingly visible in the public sphere. These examples share the objective of monitoring political and economic power centers.

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The emergence of a new communications environment has provoked fundamental changes in many areas, especially in the field of political communication, in which structures and dynamics are being altered. The proliferation of social media on the Internet implies that citizens have technological instruments at their disposal which enable them not only to consume but also to produce news (Dylko & McCluskey, 2012). Technological innovation has empowered the public, which finds new spaces of autonomy on the Internet (Castells, 2009; Jenkins, 2006). The information environment, which used to focus on the relationships among a few participants (journalists, politicians, and "spin doctors"), now encompasses multiple groups that can create or incorporate new issues or topics into the public debate (Casero-Ripollés, 2010; Chadwick, 2011). Setting aside all the problems that undoubtedly may go along with this new 2.0 scenario (Chester, 2007; Hindman, 2009; Morozov, 2011; Sunstein, 2007; Trapel & Maniglio, 2009), the plethora of information fosters transparency, facilitates many-to-many communication processes, and promotes citizen's interactivity (McNair, 2006).

All these changes contribute to the creation of new modes of collective action in which network connections play an essential role (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The Internet has thus become a catalyst for political activism (Lomicky & Hogg, 2010). Digital technologies, particularly social media, might not only improve the organization, coordination, aggregation, orchestration, mobilization, and globalization of citizen actions such as protests but also might generate new modalities of political behavior. These behaviors are related to extra-representative participation (Torcal, Teorell, & Montero, 2006), a form of representation that occurs outside traditional institutions. These new forms of political action renew and transform the political participation of citizens by adding new tactics and by reinforcing some traditional political processes (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010).

This article focuses on political monitoring as a process that exists independent of and prior to the consolidation of the Internet but that has been enhanced by its presence. Hence, a convergence between "old" and "new" dynamics of civil society participation has occurred as a consequence of the Internet's catalyzing effect. In this sense, the consolidation of monitoring processes is one of the main novelties in political participation that has arisen from the digital environment.

Digital technologies and the new communications environment, including old and new media, have enabled the emergence of monitoring as a new political dynamic related to the participation of civil society. Political theorists such as John Keane have classified contemporary democracies as monitory, based on the fundamental and predominating presence of such processes (2009). The spread of monitoring is increasingly significant, and thus, many heterogeneous actions are now included in this concept. This article aims to examine, differentiate, and classify the various modalities that can be adopted by the monitoring process in current societies based on several paradigmatic cases. First, however, we briefly define the concept of monitory democracy before focusing on this objective.

Monitory Democracy: Political Transformation in Communication-Saturated Societies

The notion of monitory democracy interprets the present political situation as a time of change in which monitoring has been consolidated as an emerging form of political participation (Schudson, 1998).

Monitoring, defined as the exercise of public scrutiny toward power centers and relations, is considered a rising trend due to the potential enabled by the new digital communication structure (Gripsrud, 2009; Sousa, Agante, & Gouveia, 2010). This structure is viewed as a consolidation of various counterpowers against the institutionalized power of governments and business corporations (Keane 2009, 2013; Rosanvallon, 2008).

Monitory democracy implies that diverse representative democratic systems such as the United States, India, New Zealand, and the European Union member countries are faced with the emergence of new political dynamics that alter “the self-government architecture,” with regard to political parties, elections, and parliaments (2009, p. 686). Although these institutions remain essential, they lose a certain role to the benefit of peripheral actors, who constantly scrutinize and evaluate the centers of power accumulation (Keane, 2009). This scrutiny occurs in public and addresses public interest issues. It is thus able to impact political centers in multiple ways, including changing government decisions, expanding the media and political agendas, resignations, and rectifications.

The phenomena of citizen disaffection from representative structures, parties, parliaments, and elections (Crouch, 2004; Rosanvallon, 2011) are not understood as crises of politics but as processes of change (Keane, 2009; Rosanvallon, 2008) in which monitoring appears as a form of political participation. Besides physical voting various counterpowers can closely examine the decisions made by their representatives (Castells, 2009) and blow the whistle when something appears to be wrong. As mentioned previously, this consolidation of monitoring processes cannot be understood without studying the new patterns produced in the digital communications sector that enable the existence of “something similar to a parallel public government” (Keane, 2005, p. 19). Moreover, this communications architecture is considered to promote the porosity of power centers, as various counterpowers and mechanisms that examine the exercise of power obtain access to greater numbers of instruments that can assess and value the actions of those in power through heterogeneous monitoring processes.

Three Main Fields of Monitoring: Governmental, Civic, and Shared

The heterogeneity of the scrutiny processes being consolidated in monitory democracy raises a basic question: How can these processes be identified and differentiated in the international political sphere?

The literature available to date has focused on examining the increasing relevance of monitoring processes. On that topic, Schudson introduces the term *monitorial citizens*, a kind of citizenship that incorporates public scrutiny as a novel political dynamic (1998). Other articles have examined some heterogeneous monitoring dynamics carried out by civil society and established in various contexts (Trägårdh, Witoszek, & Taylor, 2013). Moreover, there are studies that focus on the role of specific monitoring agents (Munck, 2006, 2009) as well as the role of data centers—rooted in American universities since the 1960s—regarding politics (Scheuch, 2003). The key value of the *monitory democracy* concept introduced by Keane (2009) lies in the theoretical framework offered to help understand and contextualize recent changes in political communication and democracy since the emergence of such phenomena. However, such public scrutiny processes have not yet been approached

from a practical viewpoint. This is why the present article aims to differentiate and classify the modalities that can be adopted by the monitoring process in current societies in accordance with several paradigmatic cases. This approach is studied in the following sections.

Prior to this discussion, it should be noted that the categorizations presented in this article are intertwined with the issues raised by the establishment of typologies, which are necessarily arbitrary due to the selection of elements and political processes that are dynamic by definition (Weber, 1978). The typologies established in this study highlight the characteristics most relevant and discriminatory to various monitoring processes, and as such, these categories cannot fully grasp the amount and heterogeneity of the elements. Thus, some types or examples in this study could overlap. This is why it must be noted that monitoring is specifically characterized by its dynamic dimension in which multiple actors and forms of monitoring can be entwined. However, this should not undermine the urgency to establish this type of categorization, as the categories permit distinguishing and understanding the multiple political tendencies being consolidated in various political contexts, which can be listed today as monitory democracies.

The notion of monitory democracies raises an initial question: Who exactly are the monitoring *agents* (Munck, 2006)? This question is necessarily connected to a second key question that is the primary focus of this article: What types of monitoring can be identified?

Table 1. Three Monitoring Processes.

Basic monitoring sectors	Definition	Types of monitoring
Governmental monitoring	Monitoring that depends on governmental institutions. Scrutiny is applied by public organizations to assess the situation of the political structures with respect to human rights, as well as the use of new communication tools to improve the processes of government transparency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and reports about democracy and human rights • Introduction of the principle of transparency (related to the open government concept)
Shared monitoring	Monitoring characterized by collaborations between governmental institutions and civil society to develop processes of public scrutiny.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election monitoring • Participative budgets
Civic monitoring	Monitoring led by citizens and civil society actors; process of public scrutiny of public interest issues and political and economic power centers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watchdog function • Extraction and filtration of secret or hidden information • Expansion of voices: alternative journalism • Extension of representation beyond parliaments

Source: Authors.

Avoiding an in-depth examination of the subject analyses involved in the scrutinizing processes, three main sectors around which monitoring is organized can be distinguished based on the leading actor or organization involved. Thus, we can use the terms "governmental" monitoring, "shared" monitoring, and "civic" monitoring. The first type is related to government institutions; the second is characterized by collaboration between government institutions and civil society actors, and the third is the purview of citizens and civil society. The main aspect shared by these three types of monitoring is the promotion of public scrutiny in multiple political and economic sectors and power centers. Obviously, the main differences lie in the spaces where such monitoring is conducted, although we demonstrate that there are also many differences with regard to the type and form of monitoring promoted and the sectors on which attention is focused.

Governmental monitoring processes play a key role in our societies because they are a relevant tool for strengthening democracy. They existed long before the Internet; governmental monitoring mechanisms have been progressively established since 1945 (Keane, 2009). However, the digital communication environment is introducing changes and reshaping them. In the governmental monitoring process, the monitoring agent and the agent subject to scrutiny are the same. This peculiar characteristic of the governmental monitoring actions (Schudson, 2010) caused discredit and distrust among citizens and social groups as far as the scope of that kind of scrutiny is concerned. Nevertheless, this fact faces a new scenario. Right now, digital technologies enable other external actors to survey government actions through the data shared by the government itself.

Governmental monitoring is essential because it is the foundation that enables other forms of monitoring processes (i.e., civic and shared). First, it is important to remember that a strongly established civil society able to carry out monitoring programs depends on the existence of a democratic institutional context that allows civil society to thrive (Keane, 1988). Second, much of the information obtained and assessed through a civic monitoring process comes from reports and data made public by state institutions. Governmental monitoring existence allows in-depth access into the scrutiny process to civil society. In this sense, Schudson highlights the importance of the Inspector General Act, passed in the United States in 1978, and of other laws passed in the 1970s and 1980s, which made possible assessment reports on the behavior of state institutions to be available to "journalists, advocacy organizations, and any member of the general public motivated enough to download them from government websites" (2010, p. 5).

Governmental monitoring is defined as the processes initiated by government institutions to reinforce the basic pillars of representative democracy, including judicial independence, public access to information, respect for human rights, and implementation of public policies (Munck, 2009). The development of governmental monitoring is led by heterogeneous organizations that operate at various levels (regional, national, or global) and is oriented toward the evaluation of the democratic situation in various countries according to concrete standards. The results of governmental monitoring are described in a series of reports for the wider public (Bjornlund, 2004; Schudson, 2010). This type of monitoring processes is conducted by organizations such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which is part of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Electoral Assistance

Division of the United Nations, and the Human Development Report Team within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Moreover, there are many examples of public organizations within this sector that use the Internet to spread information about their actions, measures, and public spending so as to increase transparency (Bossewitch & Sinnreich, 2012). These initiatives are related to an "open government", concept understood as access to government information in electronic form in order to increase the transparency of public offices (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010; Perritt, 1997). For instance, in the United States, a noteworthy example is Recovery.gov, an official government website that allows citizens to track government investments of public funds. Data.gov is another website that deserves mention; it informs the public about many aspects of U.S. government operations including environmental, educational, and economic issues. Similar initiatives are found in other places such as India, where the role of the India.gov.in website is noteworthy.

Shared monitoring is based on collaborations between governmental institutions and civil society; the degree of closeness varies in these collaborations in order to promote the processes of public scrutiny. These collaborations are indispensable to developing this type of scrutiny, the main areas of which focus on the representative system and its pillars, for example, election monitoring. Such monitoring began to spread after World War II (1945), especially in recent or fragile democracies, but has become a common process in many countries in recent years (Feenstra & Keane, 2014; Keane, 2009).

The Carter Center in the United States performs this type of scrutiny through its promotion of "election observation" services. Activists, election law experts, and political researchers collaborate with political representatives to ensure that the election processes in many countries operate honestly and openly. Moreover, the Center's work has proved crucial to the creation of some basic international election monitoring principles, which have been debated among international organizations such as the Electoral Assistance Division of the UN and national organizations such as the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in the United States.

Collaborations between governmental organizations and civil society actors that advance citizen scrutiny and participation are visible in other ways, as they promote the incorporation of new voices or bottom-to-top participation dynamics (Cabannes, 2004). Such cases are closer to the promotion of collective participation than pure monitoring but do represent a form of scrutiny because they monitor public investments.

The third monitoring category, *civic monitoring*, is different as it is promoted by civil society participants who have taken advantage of the opportunities offered in the new digital communications environment. Such monitoring focuses on the public denunciation of power abuses or citizen demands regarding the absence of transparency and potential imbalances in the democratic system.

All three monitoring modalities are basic to the monitoring democracy model (Keane, 2009, 2013) although in this article we focus primarily on the third modality for two reasons. First, this monitoring typology relates directly to civil society participation. Among the many political means and actions—

demonstrations, boycotts, strikes, manifestos, etc.—that civil society actors can employ to influence the political system, the process of monitoring and denouncing centers of power is becoming relevant in digital communication contexts. Monitoring becomes a common political process for civil society actors in plural and complex ways, hence its importance. Second, civic monitoring alters and reformulates the dynamics of citizen participation in the digital environment as it opens new possibilities for citizen participation via new ways of political communication. Sensitive information deriving from centers of power is now susceptible to falling into civil society hands in a wider array of ways.

That we focus on this third modality does not mean the other two are less relevant. As already pointed out, the interdependence of these modalities should not be underestimated nor should the relevance of pre-Internet monitoring agents. However, this article focuses on the catalytic effects that digital communication has on the proliferation of avenues of civic monitoring processes, hence our profound interest in this modality. Civic monitoring adopts multiple forms and is highly heterogeneous because it arises from the technological and creative innovations of activist citizens (Earl & Kimport, 2011). This point leads to the differentiation among four types of monitoring that can be assumed by this modality. These types are outlined below to contextualize the examples and cases of public scrutiny that emerge in the digital context. This is our focus from now on.

Typology of Civic Monitoring

Civic monitoring can take several forms such as public denunciation, political demands from the periphery, expansion of voting, or online petitions for public interest issues via various digital platforms. Monitoring should extend the points of view with regard to the fundamental topics presented in political speech as well as extend the number of issues discussed, especially those absent from the agendas of the political parties and the mass media (Casero-Ripollés & Feenstra, 2012). Thus, monitoring intends to suppress the secretive dimension of some decisions or institutions by delving into the digital space to collect concealed information. To summarize, civic monitoring evolves from the following four types:

1. Watchdog function
2. Extraction and filtration of secret or hidden information
3. Expansion of voices: alternative journalism
4. Extension of representation beyond parliaments

These monitoring processes are undoubtedly intertwined in such a manner that an actor can raise several forms of scrutiny much as a concrete monitoring process can be led by a heterogeneous group of actors. Thus, we should not overlook the issues previously mentioned with regard to the creation of typologies, especially those typologies we have established for a monitoring process characterized by significant malleability. However, this established differentiation can be used to identify several processes of basic scrutiny currently being consolidated as a result of actions by institutions, organizations, and platforms such as CorpWatch, Indymedia, Amnesty International, WikiLeaks, #YoSoy132, Avaaz.org, MoveOn.org, Occupy Wall Street, Movimiento 15-M, and Human Rights Watch.

Table 2. Four Types of Civic Monitoring.

Types of civic monitoring	Definition	Key concept
Watchdog function	Supervision of the behavior of power centers, denunciation of abuses, injustices, and bad practices.	Control
Information extraction and filtration	Extraction and diffusion of secret information to promote transparency.	Filtration
Expansion of voices: alternative journalism	Emergence of alternative channels for news circulation beyond mainstream media, which allows more topics to be included in the public agenda and political speech.	Information (news)
Extension of representation beyond parliaments	Extension of political representation by civil society groups that require democratic regeneration. Led mainly by new social movements organized and mobilized through the Internet. This is a key role of e-tactics, developed through digital technologies, especially online petitions.	Mobilization

Source: Authors.

The Watchdog Function

The *watchdog function* consists of controlling the behavior of political and economic power centers and denouncing abuses, injustices, and bad practices. Control is a key concept.

Acting as a watchdog has traditionally been a basic journalistic function (Casero-Ripollés, 2008). Control is exerted through the news on the behavior of the political system by informing citizens of abuses occurring in institutions of power. In this way, journalists protect the public interest and common welfare. This scrutiny is fundamental to the democratic system. The Watergate scandal of the 1970s is a notable historic illustration of this process.

The commodification and economic crises of mainstream media endanger this practice by undermining journalistic independence and commercializing journalistic activity. This situation weakens the ability of conventional journalism to monitor power centers (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007); however, there are still examples of this type of public scrutiny. In recent years, one of the most famous cases was the 2011 investigation led by *The Guardian* into the *News of the World* wiretapping case. This case was

resolved by shutting down *News of the World*, which belonged to the News Corporation and sparked a public debate on methods used by the gutter press to obtain information.

Although the role of watchdog has traditionally been assigned to newspapers and other news media, the scope of this activity is spreading. In the modern sphere, any individual or organization can potentially act as a watchdog, thanks to digital technologies which have ended journalism's monopoly in the field of public scrutiny of power centers. Citizens and civil society groups are emerging as guardians against inefficiency and injustice by denouncing illegal or immoral practices of the political and economic systems via the Internet and social media. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that there are factors which restrict citizens in their role as watchdogs or monitoring agents. The main obstacles are defined in terms of necessary costs and skills. On the one hand, monitoring processes require an amount of time that not all citizens can spare (Schudson, 2004). On the other hand, the localization, processing, and broadcasting of the relevant information sources require a skillset that not everyone has (Fuchs, 2014; Norris, 2004).

Nonprofit associations such as CorpWatch illustrate this trend. This organization's investigative work focuses on achieving transparency and accountability in multinational and other large organizations. For instance, the Free Burma Campaign promoted democracy in Burma by denouncing at the international level and through the Internet the serious defects of the Burmese political system.

The invention of Twitter hashtags for citizen protests of political decisions can affect the public debate and political speech about consolidation as a global trending topic. Citizen protests in Spain via the hashtag #eurodiputadoscarasduras, which opposed the refusal by members of the European Parliament to fly in second-class seats and supported freezing expenses and salaries in a time of crisis for the following year, caused such turmoil in the Internet 2.0 space that the protests caught the attention of the mainstream media and quickly became a generalized topic of conversation (Feenstra, 2012).

Some digital spaces launched by citizens, such as MySociety.org, have also managed to monitor power center decisions and behaviors. The MySociety.org initiative was launched in the United Kingdom with the conviction that "intense accountability and active civil society are essential to the common welfare."² MySociety emerged from the UK Citizens Online Democracy project and currently aggregates many websites, including FixMyTransport, WriteToThem, and FixMyStreet, each of which specializes in some function of public scrutiny or online citizen participation. Among these is the website TheyWorkForYou. This site provides detailed information about British MPs (Members of Parliament) such as how many times they have voted, their interventions, the committees on which they work, their attendance, and their biographies. VoteWatch.eu (European Parliament), Openpolis.it (Italy), and Openaustralia.org (Australia) are other notable illustrations of monitoring and parliamentary scrutiny that have been launched by citizens or independent organizations.

² MySociety.org's goals and mission can be followed at <http://www.mysociety.org/about>.

***Whistle-Blowers and the Extraction of Secret Information
(Warning, Informing, or Denouncing)***

Another monitoring process that has particular relevance in the 2.0 context is that performed by organizations or digital platforms to investigate or collect secret or hidden information. This type of monitoring, performed by actors who are often linked to hacktivism (Lievrouw, 2011), thrives on the Internet. Highly skilled technical activists search the Internet for secret information. Moreover, these activists develop secure spaces that permit whistle-blowers to warn the public against bad practices, power abuses, and corruption and to filter information without leaving opportunities for tracking the hacktivists. Filtration is a key concept of this monitoring modality because its goal is to promote transparency.

WikiLeaks can be considered a paradigmatic example of monitoring based on the information extraction via digital technologies. This organization emerged in 2006 but became internationally famous in 2010 when the video *Collateral Murder* was broadcast. This video showed a July 12, 2007 aerial attack of Baghdad in which two U.S. helicopters, an AH-64 and an Apache, opened fire on a group of civilians, killing 12, including two Reuters news agency employees. Reuters had lobbied unsuccessfully to obtain this video prior to the WikiLeaks publication. WikiLeaks is a platform whose stated goal is to reduce corruption and consolidate democracy through public scrutiny (Sifry, 2011). This organization distributes information that organizations and governments would prefer to keep secret. WikiLeaks has initiated some of the most notable and famous monitoring processes over the past few years by releasing secret information about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as documents from the U.S. State Department. The mass media have played a role in this process by controlling the assessments, contextualization, and ultimately, large-scale publication of the information they receive from WikiLeaks. In this manner, the mainstream media, especially elite newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, and *El País*, have become megaphones for civic monitoring by enlarging the scope and social impact of such releases.

Other organizations related to hacktivism or digital civil disobedience (e.g., Anonymous) have also proven their abilities to promote three dynamics. First, to penetrate secret and protected spaces to extract sensitive information. Second, to disrupt elite corporate and political communication by hacking websites and promoting political messages. Finally, to coordinate distributed denial of service (DDOS) attacks. This constitutes another new form of public scrutiny not exempt from legal controversy.

Obtaining secret information from political and economic power centers depends on the proliferation of whistle-blowers. Insiders who release information about abuses performed within the organizations or firms for which they currently work or formerly worked are especially useful. For instance, an updated example of the classic Ellsberg release of what became known as the Pentagon Papers has seemingly reappeared over the past few years due to the presence of whistle-blowers such as Bradley Manning, the main WikiLeaks source who was arrested after denunciation by hacker Adrian Lamo. In 2011 Spider Truman, the penname of a former employee of the Italian Chamber of Members of Parliament, published, first on Facebook and later on a blog, what he initially called *The Secrets of the Montecitorio*

Caste,³ which contained information about the expenses of Italian MPs who misused public funds. In another case, known as the "Vatileaks," the papal butler Paolo Gabriele was condemned for disseminating secret information about the Vatican.

The expansion of WikiLeaks and other analogous platforms is based on providing citizens with the opportunity to disseminate secret information through virtual spaces secured by the most advanced cryptographic technology. The proliferation of these systems should contribute to increases in the number of whistle-blowers who can spread information regarding events in political and economic power centers and thus make the public aware of otherwise-concealed pieces of information.

Expansion of Voices: Alternative Journalism

Digital technologies have enabled the emergence of alternative news circulation channels beyond the mainstream media, thus strengthening monitoring through the spread of information. This process, together with public empowerment, has led to the multiplication of information producers in the digital landscape, as mass self-communication dynamics have made it easier for users not only to consume but also to produce and disseminate information autonomously (Castells, 2009). The monopoly of journalistic and political elites over information management is coming to an end (Casero-Ripollés, 2010; Davis, 2010), leading to a more open and competitive scenario on the Internet.

The proliferation of new and informative online actors has enabled the publication of topics excluded from the public agenda. Thus, it is impossible to silence news that has been overlooked by the mainstream media (Tewksbury & Rittenberg, 2012). Ultimately, the mainstream media can be forced to introduce into their agenda questions that have been circulated by civil society actors, thus giving these actors social visibility (Bakardjieva, 2012; Casero-Ripollés & Feenstra, 2012).

In this way, the range of issues that can capture public attention is enlarged. The introduction of a topic into the public agenda is a key element that influences the formation of public opinion (McCombs, 2004), which is a first step toward citizens' political participation. Consequently, spreading news and expanding the public agenda comprise a preeminent form of civic monitoring aimed at avoiding the silencing of topics relevant to the public interest.

The emergence of new information actors on the Internet is evident in the new and alternative forms of journalism (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2007). These alternative forms can be classified into the main categories of radical media and citizen journalism. *Radical media* comprise those online sites that publish alternative political and social news items that are generally excluded or marginalized by the mainstream media (Downing, 2001).

Thus, these sites are configured as privileged channels for the dissemination of the viewpoints and preoccupations in a critical way of more politically mobilized activists and civil society groups (Fuchs, 2010). The thematic agendas of these sites are always linked to the interests of social movements and to

³ Spider Truman's blog URL is <http://odiolacasta.blogspot.it>.

efforts to escape subordination to the institutional agenda imposed by political and economic systems and reinforced by the mainstream media (Della Porta, 2011; Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014). Radical media action is thus configured as a form of monitoring because these outlets contribute to the wider range of circulated issues and to the diversification of the public agenda. Radical media activity aims to catch the attention of citizens to promote the success of activism because this is the only way to increase the social relevance of an issue (Lomicky & Hogg, 2010).

One of the first and most famous examples of alternative media is Indymedia (Garcelon, 2006; Pickard, 2006). This emerged after the 1999 anti-NATO protests in Seattle, and its original structure has expanded to include dozens of independent media centers and has formed a group of alternative media organizations that publish documents in eight languages. This type of space offers alternative channels for the creation and circulation of news items that differ from or enhance those available in the mass media and whose basic distinction lies in the maintenance of economic and political independence. In this manner, radical media perform the task of constant monitoring.

The second form of alternative journalism as a type of monitoring is *citizen journalism*. Anonymous citizens can become news producers and distributors through Web 2.0 platforms and social media (Allan & Thorsen, 2009). Citizens can circulate messages, images, and information about topics of interest through blogs, social network sites such as Facebook, microblogging services such as Twitter (Murthy, 2011), social video portals such as YouTube, and image hosting websites such as Flickr. This paves the way for a potential scenario characterized by the polyphony of voices and multiplication of information actors.

Digital technologies permit any citizen to disseminate information that denounces the abuses, bad practices, and injustices of political and economic powers through user-generated content. Such news circulation can result in civic monitoring because it provides visibility for issues or injustices that are hidden from citizens. As such, citizen journalism promotes the political participation of citizens through mobilization and activism (Harlow, 2012).

A 2009 event in Iran illustrates the significant role of citizen journalism (Howard, 2010). Elections that certified the second triumph of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over the opposition candidates, led by Mir Hossein Mousavi, sparked strong waves of protests claiming electoral fraud. The government responded by censoring the Iranian media and forbidding foreign journalists to publish information about opposition demonstrations. In response to government attempts to control the mainstream media and silence opposition demands, many Iranians resorted to social media to provide news agencies and international media with their own news content and to share their personal stories of the protests. Photographs, videos, blog posts, and tweets from the streets of Tehran circulated among the protesters and within the international community (Duranti, 2013). Between June 7 and June 26, 2009, an estimated 480,000 Twitter users exchanged approximately 2 million tweets (Howard, 2010). Moreover, #IranElection became one of the most relevant trending topics of 2009. Thus, Iranian citizens, who had now become information producers and distributors, advanced their protests to the international agenda by employing a monitoring process that prevented government repression from remaining hidden.

Despite the potential of alternative journalism to broaden the scope of the issues on the public agenda and end the news control exerted by the elites, the current information scenario is still dominated by the mainstream media, which remain in charge of managing visibility and social exposure by permitting which social actors can introduce themselves and their ideas (Silverstone, 2007). Despite the existence of alternative journalism, the mainstream media are still fundamental to the incorporation of political demands from civil society into debates and political speech (Bakardjieva, 2012). Occasionally, social movements create information broadcasting strategies to attract attention from mainstream media, such that the latter may echo the denunciations and political suggestions (Casero-Ripollés & Feenstra, 2012).

The Extension of Representation Beyond Parliaments

The last form of civic monitoring is that aimed at channelling the representation of civil society, especially minorities, beyond parliamentary debates. This implies an extension of the borders of classic political party representation. Civil society pleads for recognition as a political actor that can influence political dynamics and decision-making processes beyond electoral voting (García-Marzá, 2008; Habermas, 2006).

This monitoring modality promotes the proliferation of unelected representatives who defend specific interests and issues and implies a change to the basic representative principle of "one person, one vote, one representative" to "one person, many interests, many voices, multiple votes, multiple representatives" (Keane, 2009). The growing number of political demands produces an increased number of actors to defend those demands.

Through this form of monitoring, actors in civil society can be either individuals or groups, and they usually rely on a similar political agenda. Characteristically, the actors focus on the demands of democratic regeneration. They also criticize the Establishment and the political class. Thus, the actors attempt to influence the political system and require reforms that will ensure a more open, transparent democratic system. As such, there are many petitions for improving democracy.

Under these conditions, monitoring encompasses both the defense of citizen interests that have been forgotten by the main political parties and scrutiny of the activities of power centers in order to publicly denounce abuses such as political corruption, excessive perks, absence of effective channels for citizen participation, lack of information transparency, media manipulation, and introduction of economic lobbies into politics. Besides elaborating and publishing proposals, this type of monitoring also includes careful observation of the political decision-making process conducted by governments and parliaments and the expression of disagreement when necessary.

New social movements such as Occupy Wall Street, #Yosoy132, and Movimiento 15-M have played key roles in the extension of representation beyond parliaments. These citizens groups are mainly characterized by the use of digital technologies to challenge or alter the dominant, expected, accepted ways of conduct in society and politics (Agarwal, Bennett, Johnson, & Walker, 2014; Lievrouw, 2011). Additionally, these movements are defined as nonpartisan and nonviolent and are organized in networks. The intensive use of the Internet and social media is one of the distinctive features of such movements.

The movements behave as political actors whose organizations mainly operate through the Internet, primarily through social networks that allow large groups to self-coordinate quickly and inexpensively. Thus, thanks to technology, interconnections occur among citizens who share common interests, and subsequently, new forms of activism and political participation are introduced (Harlow, 2012).

The Platform of People Affected by Mortgages (*Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*, or PAH) in Spain is a significant illustration of monitoring based on the extension of representation beyond Parliament. This group, in accord with the 15-M movement activity, has not only been able to raise awareness among citizens over the abusive clauses in many bank mortgages and the need to promote the acceptance of assets in lieu of payment, but has also managed to stop 1,011 evictions. These activities were enabled by a sound organization that began with notices on the platform blog that subsequently spread through messages on social networks. Ultimately, these notices took the form of street mobilizations, wherein hundreds of activists created human shields in front of the threatened houses.

PAH's organizational skills and strength have been evident since it managed to bring the debate on mortgages and payments on account to the Spanish Parliament in February 2013. To achieve this, the organization led a popular legislative initiative that obtained 1.4 million signatures from supporters.

These new social movements perform monitoring through the use of digital technologies to organize street demonstrations. The movements try to establish interplay between the online environment and offline activism so as to move their demands beyond the Internet. To this end, protesters take over physical spaces by encampment, lead walks for democracy, and stage demonstrations, sit-ins, and pacifist sieges of power centers (Castells, 2012). To perform monitoring activities, these social actors use new sets of collective actions (Van Laer, 2010), among which e-tactics such as boycotts, letter-writing, email campaigns, and online petitions are significant (Earl & Kimport, 2011).

Of those four tactics, online petitions are the most innovative and the closest to monitoring as an extension of representation beyond parliaments. The petitions consist of campaigns launched to gather demands based on citizen signatures in the form of digital votes. Digital platforms such as ThePetitionSite, Change.org, and Avaaz.org, which gather preoccupations and demands from citizens, are examples of this system. These platforms use Internet resources to develop low-cost campaigns and to compile a wide range of digital tools such as websites, blogs, social networks, and emails to facilitate the viral spread of their petitions. The successful fight led by Avaaz.org against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement Treaty (ACTA) is a paradigmatic case that also demonstrates the dynamic nature of the monitoring processes we are currently categorizing. In 2011, the countries involved included the U.S., Australia, Canada, Japan, Morocco, New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea. In 2012, Mexico and 22 countries members of the European Union signed as well. Indeed, although in 2008, WikiLeaks unveiled the secret negotiations for ACTA between the governments of several countries and large corporations. It was Avaaz that gathered in 2012 more than 2.8 million digital signatures against approval of ACTA. These signatures proved essential to the massive rejection of the bill by the European Parliament during the July 2012 vote (478 against, 39 in favor, 165 abstentions), as acknowledged by Martin Schulz, the European Parliament President.

Discussion and Conclusions

The digital environment creates opportunities for public participation in current affairs. One of the most important forms of participation is the stimulation of monitoring processes. These processes relate to the idea of monitory democracy (Keane, 2009), based on the emergence of agents, mainly from civil society, who scrutinize power centers, carefully observe public funds management and political decision-making processes, and publicly denounce power abuses. The dynamic presence of these actors is a significant breakthrough.

Digital technologies provide a functional monitoring infrastructure because they facilitate the promotion of such monitoring. Similarly, communication plays a key role in monitoring because many of its processes are based on the spread of information (including secret, alternative, and excluded information) to achieve its objective of control. Although it should not be forgotten that certain factors can restrict citizens in their role as watchdogs or monitoring agents, the Internet and social media are spaces of autonomy in which citizens can initiate public scrutiny as a manifestation of political activism. As such, monitoring is a form of counterpower that challenges political and economic power centers.

Monitoring has been reinforced with increased comfort with the digital environment. Monitoring processes have expanded and become increasingly complex, creating a need to classify the processes according to a specific typology. The main contribution of this article is the categorization of the three main fields of monitoring (governmental, civic, shared) and the identification of the four modalities of civic monitoring (the watchdog function, the extraction and filtration of secret information, the expansion of issues through alternative journalism, and the extension of representation beyond parliaments). Using this categorization can facilitate and broaden the academic analysis of monitoring processes, defined as new forms of political participation by citizens in the digital environment. This work also moves the concept of monitory democracy from theory to practice, thus making possible its application to empirical studies and research.

The article leaves open some areas to investigate more fully, that is, the typology of monitoring processes. Although we have focused on civic monitoring, other modalities such as government and shared monitoring should not be underestimated; in the future, it will be necessary to carry out specific studies to assess their traits in detail, especially in the case of governmental monitoring because it plays a key role in our societies by strengthening democracy from two viewpoints. First, because it lays the foundation that allows, for the most part, the practice of the other two kinds of monitoring processes (civic and shared) and hence, it has a say about them. And, second, since government policy can, as empirical work proves, either assist or hinder the monitoring work of civil society groups (Duerst-Lahti, 1989; Schudson, 2010).

For that reason, it is necessary to delve more deeply into governmental monitoring evolution since the establishment of the Internet by exploring the governmental scrutiny mechanisms in the pre-Internet era as opposed to the changes that have come about with the emergence of the digital communication environment. Such a comparison will show the steps taken by state institutions to look into the Internet's potential to disseminate information to civil society and to exert self-accountability. At

the same time, a study of the governmental mechanism evolution allows the examination of the state monitoring mechanisms that have existed since 1945 (Keane, 2009), as well as emerging forms of governmental transparency in the digital era, and to analyze their consequences in terms of political participation in and the health of democracy. Despite the surge and relevance of civic monitoring processes in digital contexts, government and shared scrutiny modalities call for further research.

This article represents a first step toward the construction of an analytical model that can observe different aspects of monitoring. These processes are highly complex. Thus, along with the typology presented in the article, it remains necessary to incorporate other variables into the analytical model such as the actors (*initiators*—those starting the monitoring process, *involved*—those helping to complete the monitoring process, and *scrutinized*—those who are being monitored), mechanisms, strategies, messages, platforms used, monitoring objectives, and the obtained results. The definitions and descriptions of the observed types of monitoring discussed in this article pave the way. Therein lie both the strength and the limitations of this approach. The strength is that this approach provides an opportunity to empirically analyze some processes that, until now, had only been studied theoretically. The limitations are the other elements still required for creation of a valid analytical model with which to empirically study this highly complex and heterogeneous subject, the understanding of which is increasingly fundamental in this time and this society.

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