

Majoritas ACADEMY

THE MAJORITAS WAY

JOURNAL 1

Upgrading Democracy



Essential questions

Why is making politics meaningful to every citizen and promoting their active engagement important? How does this benefit you?

How can democracy be considerably upgraded through citizens' participation in the political process?

How can an innovative ecosystem empowered by technology enable candid matchmaking between politicians and citizens?

Why do we call the process The Majoritas Way? And what set of tools and methods does it include?

**There is nothing that can
determine our collective
well-being more than the
political process.**

MAJORITAS PREMISE #1



The 4 'Ps' of your political campaigning

In democracies, politics can be understood as acting on behalf of the people for the good of the people. This reflects both the representative function (acting on behalf) and the trustee function (for the public good), whereby elected officials determine and implement policy in the public interest.

*'O body swayed to music,
O brightening glance,
How can we know the
dancer from the dance?'*

~ William Butler Yeats

In politics: it is impossible to know the political actor from the policy, given the entangled requirement to act on behalf of and for the good of the public, to fulfil the roles of both representative and trustee. The democratic political actor not only defines the collective good but embodies the policies that lead to it.

Political actors: the dancers

Political actors are necessary for politics to function, driving the political process. But they only get to dance because we select them to do so, legitimising and authorising them with

our votes. They remain accountable to us. We can change both the dance and the dancers.

In politics, however, most dances do not end happily for the dancers. It does not take long for many political careers to end in failure. In every election cycle, many more people run for parliament than can win seats, inevitably resulting in more losers than winners. Most major party leaders have failed to win a single general election. Even those who do triumph eventually find that their ships have run aground, no longer meeting the needs of the public or their parties.

Where there are no provisions for a maximum period in office, as with US presidents, many elected officials leave politics defeated and humiliated. Some of them do so in tears, like Margaret Thatcher. Some of them are tainted by scandals, like Helmut Kohl, Bettino Craxi and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The list of such leaders is long. Yet, all of them had once been our choice. They were elected repeatedly by citizens who believed in them, trusted them, loved them, voted for them. They all experienced democratic glory. Until the moment came when the voters disapproved of them and opted to remove them, democratically or otherwise.

Generally, though, it can be argued that the people have been served well by the politicians they have chosen. Democratic societies have tended to develop under the leadership of political actors, even if the improvement experienced by each generation has not been equally distributed.



Despite its shortcomings, the political process in democracy works!

MAJORITAS PREMISE #2

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Policy: the dance

Policies are associated with statecraft and administration. Political policies identify actions that need to be implemented to serve the public good. Where the policy is the what, political actors are the who, and the political process the how. In other words, political actors elected through the political process implement policies that are also determined by the political process.

Ideology is the political why that informs policy development and implementation. It is a set of principles and values, a worldview (Weltanschauung), and an underlying philosophy behind all political action. Usually, an ideological position is expressed in the form of a manifesto or declaration.

While the ideological why steers policy, if there is an inconsistency between the what and the why, then the political compass is lost. Anything goes, and as a result, the lines in political discourse become blurred. When ideology fails to be expressed consistently by political actors and their policies, the pursuit of a rational choice by the citizens becomes almost impossible, opening the way to populism.

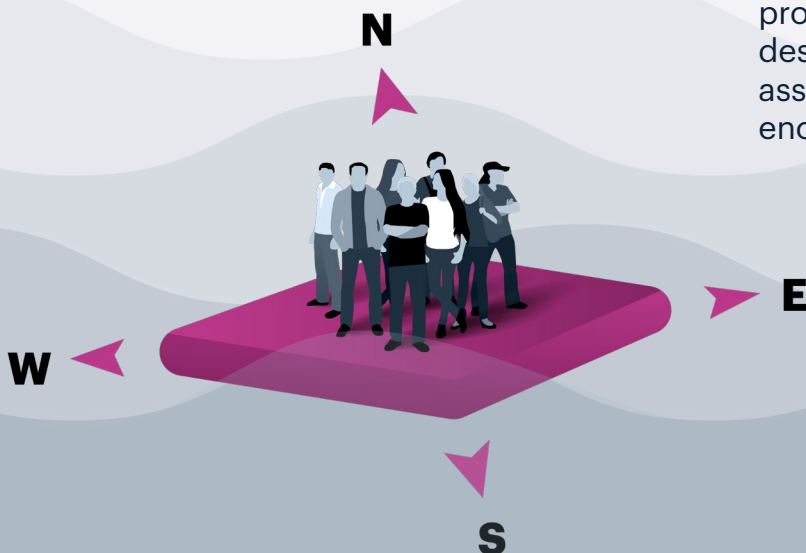
The raft: which way to go?

Let's consider an extreme example to illustrate the importance of participation in the political process. We're among 1,000 citizens on a huge square raft floating in the middle of the ocean. The citizens must decide whether the raft should move towards the north, south, east or west.

Captains are appointed to represent these four points of the compass, and the decision is to be made by voting for one of these individuals, with each of them advocating for their preferred destination and the benefits it will bring. The raft will head in the direction decided by the majority.

No matter who we vote for, we will all end up together at the same destination. There are no escape routes. Through the political process, we must select a destination for our own good, authorising the victorious captain to navigate the raft there on our behalf.

This example helps us understand the importance of our vote, not only for our own personal well-being but also for the well-being of all passengers on the raft. By participating in the political process, we determine our collective destiny—just like the cheerful woman assisting with the mail run who we encountered in the previous chapter.



A hand is shown holding a large, dark number '3'. The background is a solid dark red color with a faint, larger-scale image of a hand holding a number '3'.

**The more citizens are
involved in the political
process, the better the
outcome for society as a
whole.**

MAJORITAS PREMISE #3

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The political process

In his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle argued that a happy life should be lived in accordance with certain virtues. In his Politics, he described the role that politics and politicians must play in bringing about the virtuous life in the citizenry. In particular, he maintained that citizens must actively participate in politics if they are to pursue virtue and be happy.

According to Aristotle, there is a collective rationale behind the pursuit of public good, for it is a prerogative of every citizen. In the case of the raft, it is down to the passengers to choose their destination and determine their collective happiness. In this sense, members of society fall into two categories: those who participate in public life and pursue public good (citizens), and those who don't (idiots).

In fact, the word idiot derives from the Greek *ἰδιώτης*, meaning 'a private person or an individual not participating in public life'. It was only later, with the evolution of the Latin, French and English languages, that the word began to acquire connotations of ignorance or mental deficiency. Today, many political commentators blend both the Ancient and Modern meanings of idiot to suggest that it is both selfish and foolish not to participate in public life.

It is certainly true that the Ancient Greeks valued civic participation and criticised non-participation, distinguishing between the useful and the useless. In History of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides quotes from Pericles's Funeral Oration: Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public

matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these [public] duties not as unambitious, but as useless, we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and, instead of looking on a discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all.

Today, one criticism levelled by those who do turn their back on politics is that it is characterised by the self-promotion of political actors. From this perspective, politics is no longer in the service of society or the public good. Instead, it benefits the interests of a small ruling class. It is for the few, not the many.

In Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes examined government by monarchy, by aristocracy and by democracy. He argued that there should be a social contract between the citizens and their representatives, who were entrusted to act in their interests. His ideas were informed by his experiences of the English Civil War, a time of social turmoil and political violence, leading him to favour absolute sovereignty. In the case of the raft, then, we elect our leader, then comply dutifully with their decisions. While more autocratic than our modern conception of democracy, Hobbes's ideas continue to influence how we think of representative democracy and the participation of citizens in the democratic process.

Of course, without public participation, the way is opened to those who wish to serve their own narrow interests to the detriment of others. By declining to exercise their democratic rights and abstaining from the political process, the so-called idiots enhance rather than diminish the ills of modern politics.

Some political actors, theorists and commentators bemoan the lack of education and informed decision-making among those citizens who do participate in democracy. Others, however, highlight the wisdom of the crowd and how that is preferable to the monocular, condescending and self-serving vision of the elite. In his book on the topic, James Surowiecki illustrates how, invariably, the aggregated response from a large group of independent people will be more accurate and useful than that supplied by a single expert. The crowd is wise.

A woman with blonde hair in a bun is shown in profile, speaking into a microphone. The image is overlaid with a large, semi-transparent number '4'.

Political campaigning paves the path towards a rational political choice.

MAJORITAS PREMISE #4

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There is abundant literature written about the paradox of choice, for economics is based on theories of choice. The term 'opportunity cost' depicts the drama inherent in each choice we make. One of the most influential books of the 1980s, Milton and Rose Friedman's *Free to Choose*, identified the conditions

necessary for choice to be exercised rationally. Its thesis was challenged by John Roemer in *Free to Lose*, in which he argued that there is no such thing as rational choice, especially as the preconditions for rationality can never be met. These are:



Knowledge of all alternatives.



Ability to compare these alternatives.



Freedom to exercise choice.

Knowledge.

On the supermarket shelves, there are several dozen alternatives. Some we have never heard of. Some are brand new. Some come from a well-known brand but differ from the classic version of that brand. So, even if we visit every supermarket, every month, we cannot know all the alternatives.

Comparison.

On what basis, then, do we compare those alternatives that we are aware of? Flavour, ingredients, cleansing properties, gum care, breath freshening, tooth sensitivity, whitening? Is it possible to identify like-for-like, let alone compare them? How do we determine the value for money? After all, cheapness can be an indicator of vastly inferior quality, but it is also possible to pay a brand premium for a poor product.

Judgement.

Are we ever free to fully exercise rational judgement? Most of our opinions are shaped by those of other people, whether family, friends, celebrities, advertisers, influencers or endorsers. Their points of view pervade our lives through our personal interactions, media access and use of digital technologies. They become entangled with our own views, shaping how we think and

what we believe. Often, the only thing that matters is how often we've heard an opinion. Unconsciously, in many cases, the toothpaste we purchase has been selected before we even enter the store or browse online.

How, then, do these limitations on rational choice apply in the political sphere, especially in the case of elections? Are we ever in a position to choose rationally between political offers and candidates? Is it possible to know all the alternatives when, in theory, any citizen can put themselves forward as a candidate? Even where there are two alternatives, on what basis do we exercise choice? Manifesto, policies, past performance, values, charisma, success in another field, a combination of some or all of these? What role do our own ideological preferences, party allegiances and cognitive biases play in discounting some candidates and drawing us towards others? Even if we were able to disregard these factors, would we be able to assess the candidates' different qualities objectively?

It's almost impossible to imagine ourselves divested of the conditioning that is derived from social influence. All the same, if we are to fulfil our roles as citizens and pursue the public good, then it is necessary for us to exercise choice, despite its shortcomings.

As Theodore Roosevelt is alleged to have said: 'In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.'

Citizens need to feel that not only are they doing the right thing, but they are doing so without being deceived by the political process. They want the choices they make to have the effect of advancing the public good. Very often, however, voters succumb to buyer's remorse syndrome, regretting their choices, questioning the rationality of the decisions they made and the votes they cast. This can have the effect of shifting them into the domain of the 'idiots', ceasing their involvement in public life.

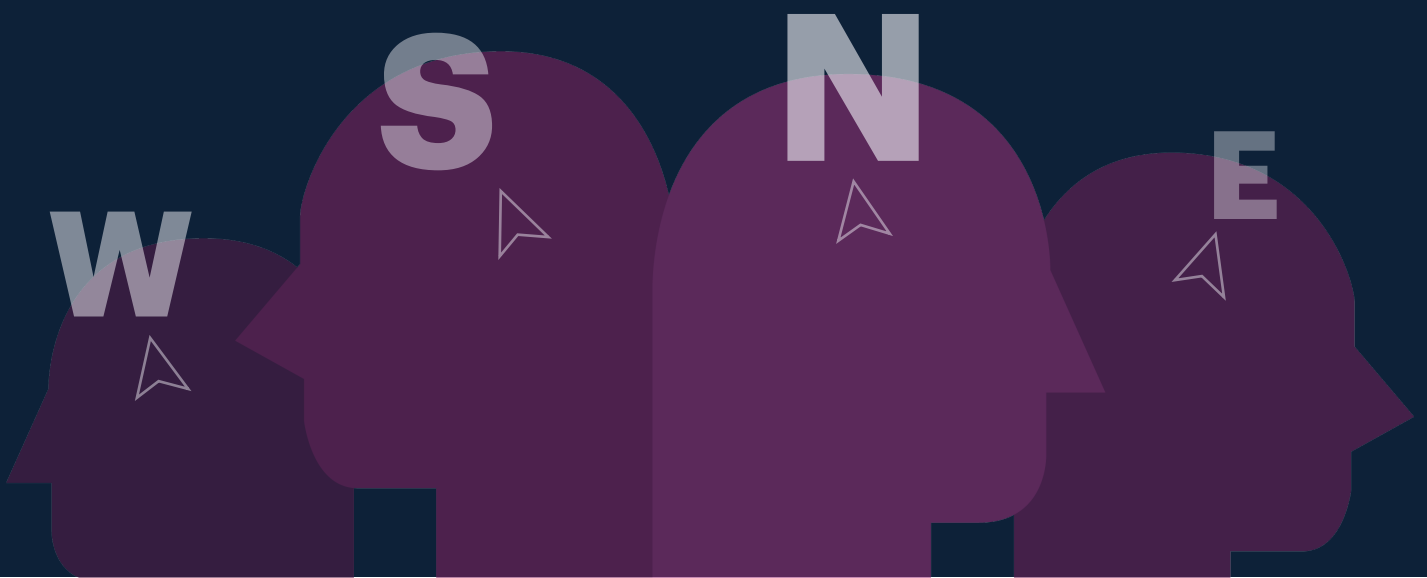
The need to campaign

Let's return to our raft and consider the role of political campaigning in the formation of choice. If the selection of captain and direction of travel is for us to determine, then

we can make certain assumptions. For example, each candidate to be captain will try to secure more votes for their respective destination. To this end, they will campaign, trying to persuade the passengers of the superiority of their own captaincy and their preferred destination over the other options, making a case for their 'offer'.

Each candidate will need to both construct and communicate their offers, building awareness among and attracting the passengers. This means that four parallel campaigns will be taking place, competing for attention and providing each passenger with an opportunity to learn about and compare all the offers. Informed passengers will then be able to choose the offer that most closely aligns with their notion of 'good', and the captain who they believe will deliver on their behalf.

Campaigning, then, is a necessary condition for the formation of passenger choice. Without campaigning, the passengers will have no basis on which to exercise their choice. However, campaigning needs to be appropriately sharpened so that offers made by political actors can be matched with citizen needs and expectations.



**Political campaigning is
the matchmaking process
between the political
actor and the citizen.**

MAJORITAS PREMISE #5



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Matching passenger needs with targeted campaigning

Each captain's offer is underpinned by ideology. In constructing and communicating their offers, including their insistence on heading towards a certain point on the compass, they will need to explain why they believe this to be the correct course of action in a way that will resonate with the passengers. The captain who favours going north, for example, must help the passengers understand precisely why that destination meets their needs and expectations and is preferable to the other options.

Yet, how can the captain know the passengers' needs and expectations? How can they know if their message will resonate with the passengers? A passenger who cares mostly about global warming would want to learn about the environmental conditions of the northern destination. A passenger who cares most about business would want to learn more about the economic opportunities of this destination. A passenger who cares most about human liberties would want to learn more about the human rights conditions there. It follows that if a captain who advocates for going north wishes to secure the votes of each of these passengers, their offer and communication needs to be tailored to these varied needs and expectations.

This is the starting point of any political campaign. Without an understanding

of what is most important to the citizens, it is not possible to develop appropriate offers that will resonate with the voters.

In conclusion, without appropriate research, the candidates for the raft's captaincy would not know how to construct and promote their offer to the passengers. In turn, without resonance, the passengers would have no basis on which to decide the destination of the raft. The likelihood is that, in the absence of appropriate political campaigning, the passengers would opt to behave like 'idiots', leaving the destination of the raft to chance.



Honest vs deceptive campaigning

At Majoritas, we are in the business of upgrading democracy. The more democracy flourishes, the more honest political campaigning will be required. Honest political campaigning is meaningless in autocratic or dictatorial regimes. By default, such regimes have no incentive to present an honest offer to citizens as they do not care about what the citizens think anyway.

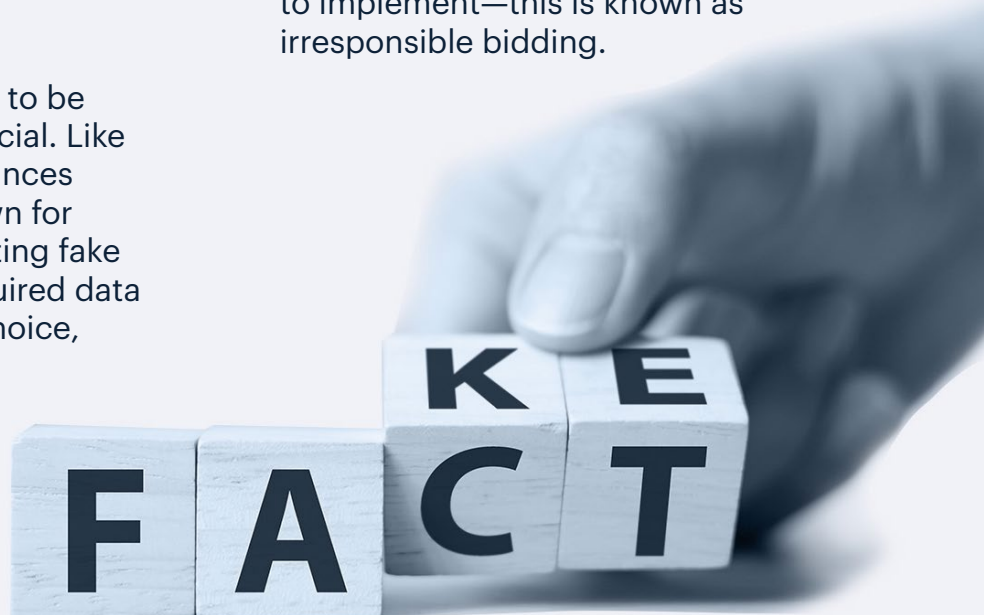
Honest campaigning is founded upon values and, in some respects, can be likened to matchmaking. It requires someone who understands the needs of both political actors and potential voters, as well as a sincere and truthful demonstration of the qualities and defaults of these individuals who potentially could be interested in one another. Inevitably, there tends to be an emphasis on the positive in this approach, which can gloss over defects and differences of opinion.

A deceptive campaigner tends to be more short-termist and superficial. Like procurers, they seek quick alliances of convenience. They are known for distorting the truth, disseminating fake news, and mining illegally acquired data to exert influence over voter choice,

resulting in irrational decisions. These people undermine democracy. In constructing their offers, political actors must establish and demonstrate a rationale that persuades citizens that they are the best match in terms of what they stand for and aspire to deliver. This is the supply side of politics. In turn, citizens will seek out political actors whose offers they perceive to align with their own values, interests and aspirations. This is the demand side of politics.

Successful campaigns are those where demonstration and perception match, where supply meets demand. In the strictest sense, therefore, even deceptive campaigns can be successful. In fact, propaganda and populism often win elections. However, The Majoritas Way is centred on a framework that supports and advocates honest campaigning, and this is our criterion for success, with the Majoritas ecosystem designed to support the work of matchmakers.

A voter may perceive a political actor's offer as either honest or dishonest and choose whether to accept or reject it. When a political actor demonstrates a dishonest offer—for example, promising policies that will be impossible to implement—this is known as irresponsible bidding.





**The honest campaigner
upgrades while the
deceptive campaigner
downgrades democracy.**

MAJORITAS PREMISE #6

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Consider, then, the role of political campaigning, the matchups between demonstration and perception, and how this affects voters' decisions and actions in the following four scenarios.



The role of the campaign is to make sure that the voters are aware of the offer and perceive it as honest. It can be the catalyst for a rational match. Such campaigns are usually referred to as A campaigns because they serve an honest political offer. This is the work of an honest campaigner.



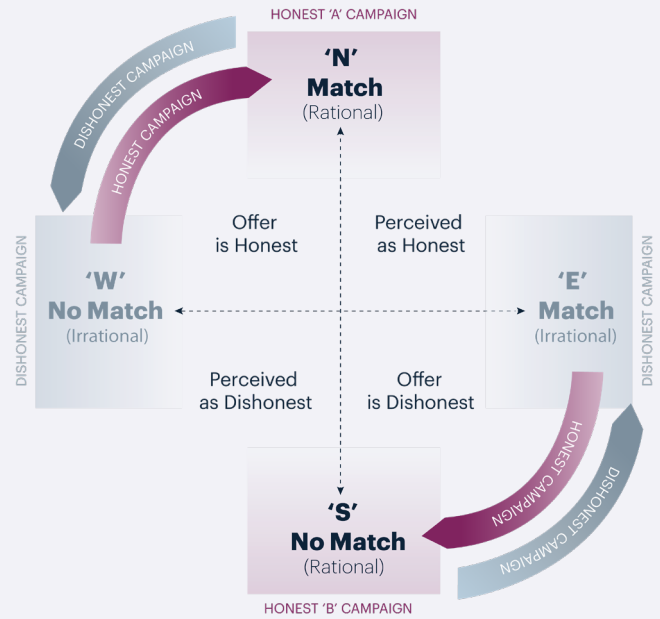
The role of the campaign is to fool the voters into perceiving a dishonest offer as honest. It can be the catalyst for an irrational match. This is the work of a deceptive campaigner.



The role of the campaign is to inform the voters that the offer is dishonest and ensure that there will be no match for rational reasons. These are referred to as B campaigns, serving to attack populist political opponents. This, again, is the work of an honest campaigner.



The role of the campaign is to mislead the voters into perceiving an honest offer as dishonest, ensuring that there will be no match for irrational reasons. This, again, is the work of a deceptive campaigner.



An honest campaigner will seek to convert Ws into Ns and Es into Ss, informing citizens of the true content of offers and moving them from the irrational to the rational. The deceptive campaigner, on the other hand, will seek to spoil any rational matches, shifting potential voters in the reverse direction, misleading citizens and obfuscating the true meaning of offers.

This is good and honest campaigning. It entails a sophisticated, data-based matchmaking operation that involves candidates and citizens. If executed well, this is a win-win situation. It benefits political actors, voters and democracy itself.

A deceptive campaigner will seek to trick the citizens and snatch their vote. They will strive to create a convenient—not a true—perception of the candidate's offer. A deceptive campaigner will embrace populism and ignore the ideological limitations of every political offer.



**Digital campaigning is a
synchronised tango
between the citizen and
the political actor.**

MAJORITAS PREMISE #10

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Technology serving democracy?

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, social media and digital technology gave rise to a potentially new era in politics. Today, digital reigns supreme. All political actors—at local, regional and national levels—now realise that without a digital presence, they cannot compete. This applies globally, with internet access above 50% even in low-income countries, although high levels of digital literacy and influence remain the preserve of the young, the well-educated and the wealthy.

We have found that digitally connected citizens are the most dynamic when it comes to forming a political preference. Older and lower-income citizens tend to be politically monolithic, voting for the same party at each election cycle. Politically volatile and undecided citizens, however, are mostly found among the digitally connected. These are the people who often determine election results, increasing the importance of online campaigning.

Digital penetration in high-income societies is already close to 100%. Soon, this will be the case in most places on Earth. The lockdown, home-working and social-distancing requirements that arose during the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a rapid and significant change in behaviours and habits. Consequently, the trend towards digital is accelerating, with an increasing

number of governments, as well as corporate products and services, now available online. Inevitably, most political organisations are now turning to turn digital.

This does raise an important question: Why has direct digital democracy still not materialised? Little more than a decade ago, technology appeared to be paving the way for a modern version of direct democracy. Yet, rather than enabling it, platform technologies, such as those offered by Facebook, Twitter and Google, are often blamed for interfering with and hampering elections.

In reality, of course, social media and other technologies serve only to amplify what political campaigners offer and seek. To only blame technology is somewhat myopic and disregards the fact that political campaigning, despite its importance to the democratic



process, remains uncertified and unregulated.

Instead of upgrading established democracies and serving as an instrument of democratisation in countries struggling with authoritarianism, social networks have been compromised by anti-democratic forces lurking in the shadows. The promise of the Arab Spring has quickly given way to the exploitation and machinations of Cambridge Analytica and others.

The blame apportioned to technology platforms for questionable election and referendum outcomes has resulted in prosecution, fines, and regulation. Scandals surrounding the collection and use of data have led to public inquiries and the enactment of restrictive legislation targeted at big tech companies. Political campaigning was once again rapidly transformed, this time by the rules devised to

monitor and control the online activity of political actors.


In response, some social networks have constrained or prohibited political advertising completely, depriving parties and candidates of some of their most powerful tools for campaigning. This leaves political actors in a dilemma. On the one hand, there can be no successful campaign today without the heavy use of technology. On the other, relying on Facebook and other social networks is no longer an option.

Owning digital assets is quickly turning into a mandatory requirement for political actors everywhere in the democratic world. Relying solely on social media networks was not enough in the past and will certainly be even less so in the future.

In this way, political actors will gain control over their online presence. Parties and candidates can end their dependency on platforms over which they have no authority whatsoever. Many political actors have seen their accounts suspended or banned at critical moments, sometimes for unsubstantiated reasons that appear to be politically motivated. This happens more so in non-English speaking countries where activists take advantage of the underdeveloped content-monitoring algorithms by reporting opponents en masse for alleged malpractice, seeking the automatic removal of their posts and other online content.

Recent developments could provide an opportunity to deploy more powerful and efficient instruments, given that those provided by big tech companies were originally developed to match the requirements of disparate industries. Political actors are now motivated to acquire or develop tools that meet their distinctive needs. This is where the Majoritas ecosystem comes into play.





**Democracy is the sum of
“many ones” which may be
generated through digital
technology.**

MAJORITAS PREMISE #11

PHOTO: The Sum of 'Many Ones': A collage portrait of Gottfried Leibniz made with original magazine covers (Nicholas Christodoulides, 1990). Majoritas collection.

Majoritas ACADEMY

Walk the week

Consider what you have just read and then ask yourself:

How are the ideas and information connected to what you already knew?

What new ideas broadened your thinking or extended it in different directions?

How do these ideas connect with what you are working on at work?

How can you use what you have learned in your work?

