



Political Communication in Direct Democratic Campaigns: Enlightening or Manipulating? (Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century)

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The contributors to this volume analyze the communication processes in Swiss direct democratic campaigns and their effect on the information processing and opinion formation of the citizen public. The book adopts an integrated approach to the study of political communication that combines a demand side with a supply side vision of democracy. The key question it tries to answer is whether, in direct democratic campaigns, the political elites are capable of manipulating the voters in such a way as to impose their policy goals without taking the voters' preferences into account. Based on a detailed analysis of the politicians' strategies, media coverage, and the opinion formation of the public, the authors arrive at the optimistic conclusion that direct democratic campaigns are rather more enlightening than manipulating. The voters learn considerably in the course of the campaigns and based on their enhanced knowledge the overwhelming majority make choices consistent with their preferences.

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