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## ARE SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION HELPING TO DEMOCRATIZE OUR POLITICS

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### ABSTRACT

*The discoveries of a literature review regarding Social Media and participation are presented in this article. In addition, to better understand the significance and effect of social media on elections, we provide field data from the Dutch elections of 2010 and 2011. When it comes to involving individuals in party politics, there are many obstacles to overcome. Previous attempts to influence public involvement using earlier Internet technologies did not fulfill expectations, according to recent results in the literature. This may change with Social Media, since involvement seems to be the fundamental idea that differentiates the 'old' web from the 'new' Social Media. During the municipal elections in the Netherlands, social media had no major impact on voting behavior. However, during the national elections, candidates who were more active on social media received more votes from most political parties. Finally, we suggest a future research program to investigate how political parties may use social media to innovate and enhance how they interact with members and participants.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Elections, Internet, Participation, Politics, Social Media.*

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