Abstract: Christine ZUMELLO

Crafted Democracy in the USA? Vote, Invest and Express Yourself

We intend to explore the democratic underpinnings – and/or shortcomings - of recent developments in electoral participation as well as “financial” participation, i.e. investment or indebtedness in the United States.

Through the advances of ICTs and the web 2.0, many opportunities or renewed political participation have developed over the last 15 years. A new dynamics of political behavior and involvement has been touted as a breakthrough in collaborative spaces and forums of debate on the internet, whether through blogs, chat rooms of net root political communication. Similarly, on financial markets, the dichotomy between insiders and outsiders seemed to have been overcome by a movement towards the democratization of financial markets as a result of the “finacierisation” of the American economy. Hence, online trading and e-brokers, or more recently mobile banking, were gradually being publicized as a democratic breakthrough for Americans. More accessible financial services and more open, or so it seemed, political arenas, were a sign of greater empowerment and capability for American consumers/citizens.

The Great Recession has certainly cast a shadow on these developments, be it for financial actors than for politicians, or has it?

Are the possibilities offered by ICTs both in finance and politics merely a way to revamp rhetorical approaches to political and financial participation? The efforts at trying to “educate” investors through a myriad of financial literacy programs as well as a clear attempt to see through political influences by a-financial or a-political forces will be assessed in this paper.

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