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Democracy and Media Decadence

We live in a revolutionary age of communicative abundance in which many media innovations – from satellite broadcasting to smart glasses and electronic books – spawn great fascination mixed with excitement. In the field of politics, hopeful talk of digital democracy, cybercitizens and e-government has been flourishing. This book admits the many thrilling ways that communicative abundance is fundamentally altering the contours of our lives and of our politics, often for the better. But it asks whether too little attention has been paid to the troubling counter-trends, the decadent media developments that encourage public silence and concentrations of unlimited power, so weakening the spirit and substance of democracy. Exploring examples of clever government surveillance, market censorship, spin tactics and back-channel public relations, John Keane seeks to understand and explain these trends, and how best to deal with them. Tackling some tough but big and fateful questions, Keane argues that ‘media decadence’ is deeply harmful for public life.

JOHN KEANE is Professor of Politics at the University of Sydney and at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB). He is also the Director of the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (IDHR) at the University of Sydney. His online column ‘Democracy Field Notes’ appears regularly in the British- and Australian-based *The Conversation* (theconversation.com/uk). Among his best-known books are the best-selling *Tom Paine: A Political Life* (1995), *Violence and Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), *Global Civil Society?* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) and the highly acclaimed full-scale history of democracy, *The Life and Death of Democracy* (2009).

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements and permissions</i>	<i>page</i> vi
1 Communicative abundance	1
2 Monitory democracy	77
3 Media decadence	109
4 Democracy’s opponents	191
5 Why freedom of public communication?	213
<i>Index</i>	246

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