

Module 5 (Part 3)

Active Voices: Digital Media as a Catalyst for Civic Engagement

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Module 5 (Part 3/4)

Ethical considerations in digital activism, including privacy, accountability, and misinformation



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Module 5

Active Voices: Digital Media as a Catalyst for Civic Engagement

This module explores how digital media enhances civic participation and the involvement of underrepresented groups in democratic causes.

Structure Of Module 5

YOU ARE HERE

MODULE 5 (Part 1)

Topic 1 (47 slides)



Digital Activism in Europe: Opportunities and Challenges for Civic Participation

examines the role of digital activism in shaping political and social movements in Europe, while addressing challenges such as censorship, surveillance, and misinformation.

MODULE 5 (Part 2)

Topic 2 (51 slides)



Using Social Media for Political Engagement: Best Practices and Ethical Considerations

Examines how social media can be used effectively and ethically for political engagement, while addressing risks such as misinformation, data privacy, and polarization.

MODULE 5 (Part 3)

Topic 3 (45 slides)



Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

Evaluates how digital platforms enhance democratic participation and address digital literacy barriers.

MODULE 5 (Part 4)

Topic 4 (37 slides)

The Role of Digital Media in Strengthening Civic Dialogue and Social Movements

Assesses how digital media enables inclusive civic dialogue and mobilises grassroots movements through impactful campaigns.



Focus Areas (4) – Each of the 4 Topics covers 3-4 Focus Areas, with – Introduction, Context, Case Studies, Videos, Tools etc.

Resources Section: Each topic has a Resources Area complete with a set of digital tools, exercises and resources to assist learning application and to provide a deeper interactive level of understanding.

Conclusions: Provided on each topic at the Module in Part 4.

Module Overview

This module explores how **digital media enhances civic participation** and the involvement of underrepresented groups in democratic causes. It focuses on the use of **digital activism and crowdsourcing** to mobilize communities and **promote social change through online platforms**. It also examines the role of digital media across Europe in fostering political participation, civic engagement, and advocacy for social transformation.

01

Challenges for Civic Participation

02

Using Social Media for Political Engagement:
Best Practices and Ethical Considerations

03

Digital Participation and Engagement of
Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging
Democratic Involvement

04

The Role of Digital Media in Strengthening
Civic Dialogue and Social Movements

Module Snapshot



Focus Area: Digital Activism & Governance

Aim: Focuses on the **involvement of underrepresented groups in digital activism to mobilise communities around democratic causes**

This section explores how digital media **empowers civic engagement and involvement of underrepresented groups in democratic causes, leveraging digital activism** and crowdsourcing to mobilise communities and drive social change through online platforms

Key Words: Activism, Underrepresented groups, Digital Activism, Civic Participation, Political Engagement, Democratic Causes, Crowdsourcing, Online Digital Campaigning, Community Mobilisation, Digital Activism, Social Movements, Advocacy



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Overview

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Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education



02

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Digital communities create spaces for debate, activism,...

03

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Case studies on successful digital activism movements in Europe



04

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Resources



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Module 5 (Part 3) Interactive Learning Elements

-  **45 Slides**
-  **01 Exercise**
-  **03 Videos**
-  **02 Case Studies**

-  **2 Digital Tools**
-  **0 Toolkits & Guides**
-  **03 Articles & Reports**
-  **7 Real World Examples**



Overview

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

The virtual realm reproduces and sometimes amplifies the social, economic and political inequalities that people face in the physical world. This section explores how digital media can facilitate and encourage underrepresented groups to participate in civic and political processes, analysing innovative approaches that encourage democratic involvement among younger generations.

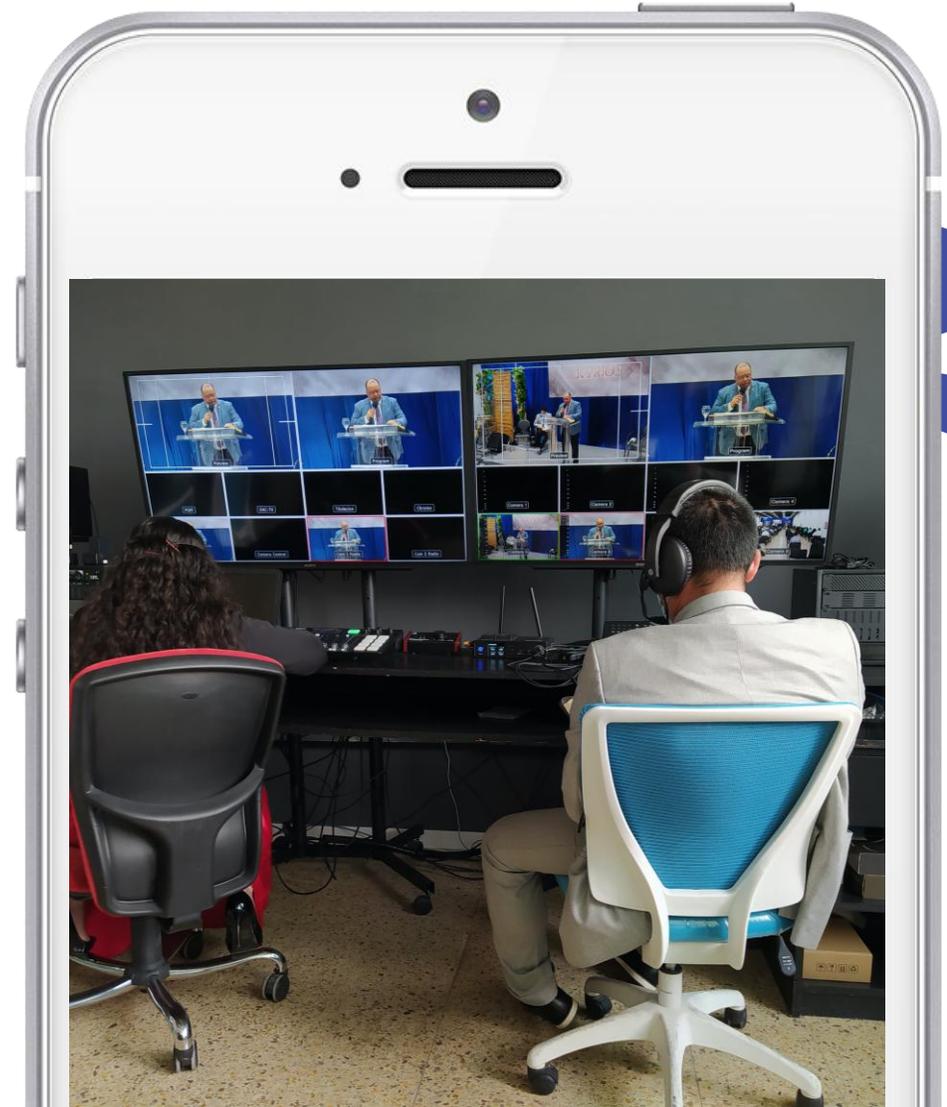
Learning Outcomes

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- Evaluate how digital platforms and tools can enhance participation in democratic processes and civic engagement.
- Develop strategies to address digital literacy gaps and barriers that prevent underrepresented groups from engaging in digital activism.

Explains Key Definitions and Concepts

- **Digital Participation:** Strategies for increasing people's engagement in civic matters.
- **Civic Tech Initiatives:** Digital tools designed to promote involvement in democracy.
- **Digital Literacy for Political Engagement:** Enhancing critical thinking and responsible participation.





Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

Online digital platforms are opening the door to new forms of civic participation, civic engagement and democratic education. They enable people to connect and interact with each other, with other organisations and with public administrations at different levels. They also provide access to information and knowledge and, in some cases, generate new ones.

The potential of digital platforms in terms of including under-represented groups is huge, but it's important not to underestimate or ignore the impact of the digital divide and the danger of people getting left behind in digital participation processes.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

Next, we will examine the potential aspect of internet and digital platforms for the inclusion of under-represented groups is important, in particular, in the following areas:

- Accessibility
- Breaking the monopoly on spaces for information, meeting, debate and participation
- The emergence of new forms of collective action
- Empowerment of underrepresented groups.

We will now look at each of these aspects.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- **Accessibility.** Reduction of barriers to participation and access to information. Traditional barriers related to time, physical access to places, identification of appropriate channels, etc. disappear in the virtual environment. The incorporation of reliable automatic translators, the use of reading devices, the possibility of 24/7 access to information and autonomous time management, among other issues, make it possible to broaden the range of possibilities for participation in general, and for underrepresented groups in particular.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- **Breaking the monopoly on spaces for information, meeting, debate and participation.** The emergence of the internet (remember that the www was created in 1989, and the first social network appeared in the 1990s) led to the emergence of new spaces for interaction, organisation, communication and participation. The tension between the monopoly of companies that own platforms and social networks (Meta, X, etc.) and those who advocate open source and another way of understanding freedom and autonomy implies the emergence of new spaces and rules.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- The **emergence of new forms of collective action.** Technology, its development, opportunities and limitations combine with the creative capacity of digital activism. In this way, collective action adapts, uses in new ways and incorporates elements of technology to promote interconnection, debate and action.
- **Empowerment of under-represented groups.** While acknowledging the existence of the digital divide, it is important to note how groups that may have felt excluded from traditional channels of participation or whose issues were not part of the political agenda are gaining visibility and relevance.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

The potential of digital platforms for civic participation and democratic education may be limited by the following issues:

- Persistence of the digital divide
- Lack of proper content moderation
- Online data trading
- Lack of e-accountability
- Environmental impact of the use of digital platforms

Let's take a closer look to these aspects



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- **Persistence of the digital divide.** As seen in previously, barriers to digital participation, including online censorship, misinformation, and accessibility, the virtual environment reproduces the inequalities of the physical world. It is important to consider the persistence of these inequalities.
- **Lack of proper content moderation.** The lack of proper content moderation contributes to spreading misinformation, manipulation or hate speech. And they amplify misconceptions and polarisation..



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- **Online data trading.** Irregular data collection, the sale of data without people's knowledge, and other illegal or alegal marketing strategies involving the data and content of users of digital platforms and networks are highly sensitive issues. This is even more so if this data is used for political microtargeting.
- **Lack of e-accountability.** The lack of transparency of both state and private operators regarding the use of data and other uses of technology (surveillance of digital activists, for example) is an issue that needs to be addressed.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- **Environmental impact of the use of digital platforms.** The carbon footprint of every action carried out in the online world (sending instant messages, emails, search engine queries, interaction with Artificial Intelligence, etc.) consumes energy and leaves a carbon footprint. It is important to be aware of the impact of digital media consumption and try to strike the balance between sustainable digitalization and digital collective action.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

Digital tools can be spaces where different actions are carried out. Among these, one that stands out is providing verified and balanced information for under-represented groups. Some examples are:

[Infomigrant](#) provides migrants with reliable, verified, objective and balanced news and information about their countries of residence, transit countries and destination countries.

[Refugee.info](#) provides clear, accurate and up-to-date information for refugees and asylum seekers on their rights, available services, etc.

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Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- [U Report](#). Europe. U-Report Europe provides lifesaving and life-improving information to young refugees and their families and supports continuous engagement with young people. It also supports the mobilisation of youth to actively participate in building better societies.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

On the other hand, apart from the possibility of verifying information or obtaining information about underrepresented groups, we can find opportunities for On the other hand, in addition to the possibility of verifying information, internet and digital platforms also provide possibilities for mentoring and community building.

Mentoring is a strategy that facilitates both knowledge transfer and work on adopting or learning skills, as well as contributing to the construction of social networks. Powerful digital tools aimed at developing mentoring programmes can be found online.



Focus Area 1

Digital platforms as tools for civic engagement and democratic education

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

Digital platforms allow community building, and therefore, contribute to civic engagement and can make possible social change. There are many initiatives in the virtual sphere dedicated to community building. The arrival of decentralised digital networks adds an element of greater diversity.



Focus Area 2

Digital communities create spaces for debate, activism, and grassroots organisation

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

The emergence of digital platforms and social media represents an opportunity, albeit not without obstacles, for under-represented groups (migrants, refugees, the LGTBQ+ community, people with disabilities, etc.) to:

- **Create their own narratives and identity.** The digital sphere provides a space to develop their own narratives (without restrictions or judgements), speak for themselves, from their own experience and diversity. Control over their own narratives, and therefore over what is projected publicly (who we are, what happens to us, how we live, etc.) allows for the construction of an identity.



Focus Area 2

Digital communities create spaces for debate, activism, and grassroots organisation

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

- **Create and consolidate of solidarity networks.** These networks are dynamic, prioritise the creation of safe spaces where members can express themselves without fear, and adapt to circumstances and the opportunities and potential offered by technology in the digital sphere. With the consolidation of solidarity networks, spaces can be created for the formation of a collective online identity and, from there, the beginning of collective action (petitions, demonstrations, fundraising, etc.).



Focus Area 2

Digital communities create spaces for debate, activism, and grassroots organisation

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

Some examples of digital communities:

- **Trevor Space** (<https://www.trevorspace.org/>) an online community for LGBTQ+ young people, provides a safe space for sharing experiences and receiving support (crisis services for preventing suicide, peer support,...) They also work on advocacy in support of young LGBTQ+ people and public education.
- **Chayn** (<https://www.chayn.co/>). It is a global nonprofit, run by survivors and allies from around the world, creating resources to support the healing of survivors of gender-based violence. Chayn contains open, online resources and offers services for survivors of abuse that are trauma-informed, intersectional, multilingual and feminist.



Focus Area 3

Case studies on
successful digital
activism
movements in
Europe

Digital Participation and Engagement of Underrepresented Groups: Encouraging Democratic Involvement

Activists use digital tools to drive policy change and social movements. Two case studies will be presented below:

- [#NiUnaMenos \(Spain\)](#). An initiative to raise awareness about gender violence.
- [Alarm Phone Initiative](#). A solidarity initiative with migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean Sea

#NiUnaMenos (Spain)



Context

Originated in Argentina, the #NiUnaMenos movement aims to raise awareness and denounce gender-based violence, especially femicide. It also demands justice for victims and promotes the prevention and eradication of gender-based violence. The movement has been consolidated in Spain.

Various collective digital actions have been carried out under the hashtag #NiUnaMenos.

Key aspects:

- #NiUnaMenos is a transnational movement that adapts to the particularities of the social, economic and political context of each country. In Spain, it is linked to the feminist movement and to widespread outrage as a result of the country's economic, political and social crisis.
- Synergies between mobilisation in physical spaces (demonstrations, rallies, etc.) and online actions, especially through Facebook, Instagram, etc.

#NiUnaMenos (Spain)

Key aspects:

- The movement has succeeded in raising awareness of the social problem of gender-based violence both in the traditional media and on the political agenda.
- Progress has been made in raising social awareness of the issue by changing the discourse, normalising concepts such as patriarchy and highlighting the multiple forms of violence suffered by women.
- It has organised and continues to organise mass demonstrations.

#NiUnaMenos (Spain)

Read the following texts:

- Giraldo-Luque, Santiago; Fernández-García, Núria; Pérez-Arce, José-Cristian (2018). 'The thematic centrality of the #NiUnaMenos mobilisation on Twitter'. *El profesional de la información*, v. 27, n. 1, pp. 96-105 <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2018.ene.09> (Spanish)
- Piatti-Crocker, Adriana (2021). Diffusion of #NiUnaMenos in Latin America: Social Protests Amid a Pandemic. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(12), 7-24.
- Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss12/2> (English)
- Ending Violence against women and girls: If not you, who? UN Women https://youtu.be/W_ZPHPutN-c?si=MJF7WLqeW0rHpS0p

#NiUnaMenos (Spain)

Reflect and answer the following questions:

- What were the main contextual factors (social, political, technological) that drove the creation of these digital movements in their respective environments?
- How did the pre-existence of offline activist networks influence them?
- How was digital participation (likes, shares, hashtags) translated into meaningful collective action both online and offline?
- What obstacles (repression, digital divide, sustainability, disinformation) did they face or continue to face?

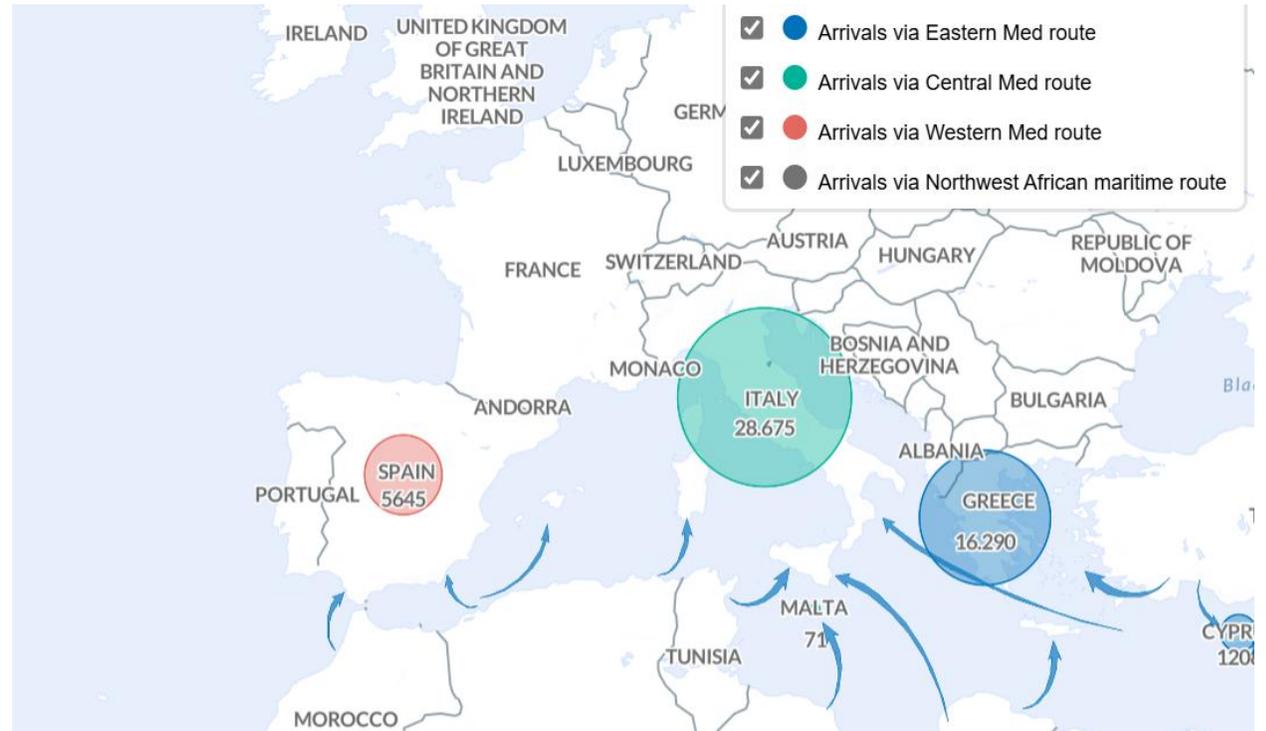
Alarm Phone

Context

The Mediterranean Sea is Europe's southern border with the Middle East and Africa. The Mediterranean has become one of the world's deadliest migration routes.

The [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) estimates that between 2015 and 2025, more than 34,000 people have lost their lives or disappeared trying to reach Europe.

In response to the continuing deaths in the Mediterranean, a group of activists created [Alarm Phone](#) in 2014.



Alarm Phone

Key aspects:

- Alarm Phone is a hotline operated by volunteers that is available 24/7 and its aimed at documenting the journey of people in precarious boats heading for European shores. It is important to know that Alarm Phone does not carry out rescues.
- Alarm Phone documents and mobilises in real time with the idea of pressuring the authorities to carry out rescues whenever possible. Their activity sometimes helps to stop the return of refugees and migrants and they also denounce pushbacks at sea, human rights violations, etc.
- The project is actively involved in the three regions through which migrants and refugees attempt to reach EU countries: the Aegean Sea (between Greece and Turkey), the central Mediterranean Sea (between Libya/Tunisia and Italy) and the western Mediterranean Sea (between Morocco and Spain).
- Alarm Phone uses social media to report cases of boats in distress and to pressure authorities to comply with their rescue obligations.

Alarm Phone



Read the context and key aspects highlighted. Visit the website <https://alarmphone.org/en/> and the following materials:

- Deaths and Repression but also Solidarity and Struggle in the Central Med https://alarmphone.org/en/2025/02/14/deaths-and-repression-but-also-solidarity-and-struggle-in-the-central-med/?post_type=release_type=post
- Maurice Stierl (2015): The WatchTheMed Alarm Phone. A Disobedient Border-Intervention. In: movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies <http://movements-journal.org/issues/02.kaempfe/13.stierl--watchthemed-alarmphone.html>
- How does the Alarm Phone Work https://alarmphone.org/en/2018/02/28/how-does-the-alarm-phone-work/?post_type=release_type=post

AlarmPhone

Answer the following questions:

- What were the main contextual factors (social, political, technological) that drove the creation of these digital movements in their respective environments?
- How did the pre-existence of offline activist networks influence them?
- What online spaces for solidarity and reporting does Alarm Phone develop?
- What obstacles might an initiative like Alarm Phone face?

04

Resources

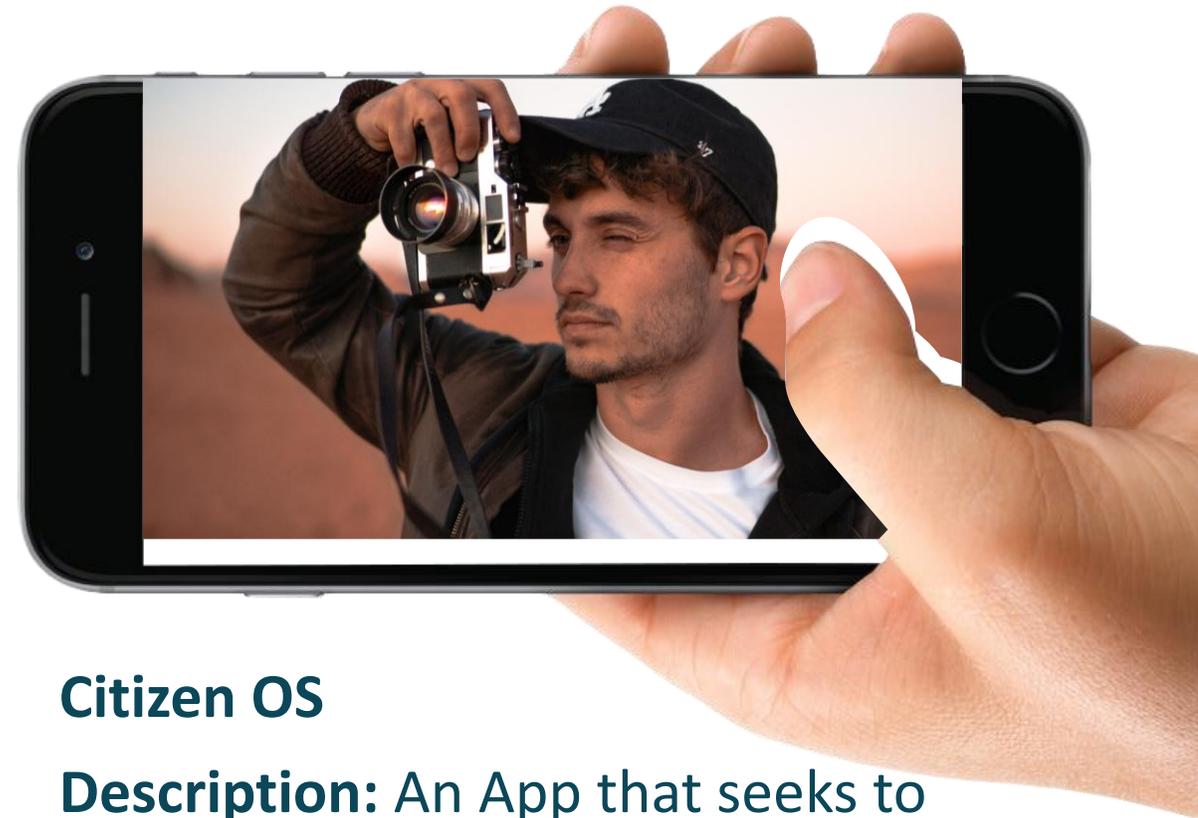


Digital Tools

maptionnaire

Description: It is defined as a digital community engagement platform that seeks to improve the practices of public participation with the aim of creating liveable cities through visual and practical tools for collecting community insights.

Link: <https://www.maptionnaire.com/>



Citizen OS

Description: An App that seeks to empower as many people as possible to participate in respectful, meaningful discussions.

Link: <https://app.citizenos.com/en/>



Exercises. Topic 3

To encourage the active and conscious search for underrepresented voices on social media or digital consumption platforms.

Instructions

- Choose digital platform that you use regularly (Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, etc.).
- Spend 15-20 minutes actively searching for accounts or content creators who belong to an underrepresented group (migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, LGTBQ+,...) that you would like to learn more about or whose perspective you don't usually see in your feed.

Reflection

- Which group(s) did you choose to search for?
- Was it easy or difficult to find these new voices on the platform? Why do you think that was?
- What kind of content do the accounts you started following share? What do you hope to learn or discover by following them?
- How can this action of actively diversifying who you follow contribute to a greater understanding and visibility of different realities?

Resources. Videos



Digital activism and how it can unify by Jess Nicholls

The digital activist Jess Nicholls conveys insights about what digital activism is, benefits to digital activism, the importance of analysing and acknowledging achievements and successes, how social media can unify and the best way to create meaningful change.



The TikTok debacle: a new age of social media activism?

The video introduces a strategy on denouncing human rights violations on a social media platform and how censorship works.

Interview



Interview with Simona Levi, Director of Xnet (Institute for Democratic Digitalization) and codirector and designer of the postdegree "Technopolitics and rights in the digital era".

00:19. Strategies for achieving activists' goals.

Understanding fears and the ideology as a tool

04:00. How to deal with digital harassment.

06:40. How to handle digital disinformation and strategies for cyberactivists. Transparency and public administrations, political parties, media and influencers.

12:36. Microtargeting and political parties

14:39. Internet for the people. Understanding activism in capitalist societies.

Support and resources.

Name of the initiative and link	Content
<p><u>Bokyong Shin, Jacqueline Floch, Mikko Rask, Peter Bæck, Christopher Edgar, Aleksandra Berditchevskaia, Pierre Mesure, Matthieu Branlat, A systematic analysis of digital tools for citizen participation, Government Information Quarterly, Volume 41, Issue 3,2024, 101954, ISSN 0740-624X</u></p>	<p>❖ What digital tools exist, and how do they help citizens engage in policymaking? This article addresses this gap by examining the supply side of digital tools for citizen participation.</p>
<p><u>Boulianne, Shelley & Theocharis, Yannis. (2020). Young People, Digital Media, and Engagement: A Meta-Analysis of Research. Social Science Computer Review. 38. 111-127. 10.1177/0894439318814190.</u></p>	<p>❖ This article uses meta-analysis techniques to summarise the findings from 106 survey-based studies (965 coefficients) about youth, digital media use, and engagement in civic and political life.</p>

Support and resources.

Name of the initiative and link	Content
<p><u>Jones-Tinsley, Sophie & Lister, Kate & Riva, Elena & Hartley, Alison. (2024). Positive Digital Communities, and the Benefits and Challenges of Co-Creation with Students from Underrepresented Groups in Higher Education. 8373-8383. 10.21125/iceri.2024.2067.</u></p>	<p>❖ The article describes the Positive Digital Communities project, a co-creation project in which students from under-represented groups worked with universities and sector bodies to co-create a toolkit of resources to support the creation of digital student communities, where students can provide peer support for each other and build a sense of community that does not rely on being on campus.</p>

Module 5: Foundations of Inclusive Digital Media: Mediation for a Connected Society

You have completed **Part 3 (Focus Area 3)**
Ethical considerations in digital activism, including privacy, accountability, and misinformation

Next is **Part 4 (Focus Area 4)**
The Role of Digital Media in Strengthening Civic Dialogue and Social Movements

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Any Questions?



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