



Annexe 2:

Contributions from the YOU p@ website Blog and Forum

www.youpa-project.eu

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The present document summarises the main comments and contributions made by participants in the YOUp@ online discussions.

The document is a real copy from the website comments. The website had 1.485 visits during the month of May 2010 and there were 68 young people registered and actively contributing to the discussions.

For more information and comments please visit the website:

www.youpa-project.eu



Forum topic : Politicians and the media: TV shows

Comment1: Submitted by stuartmill.john

The new media are perceived by politicians as an important channel in reaching out to the younger generations. No doubt about that. Will the younger generations listen and interact? That is the question. Will they make a difference by doing so? Will they just ignore politicians online just as much as they ignore them on TV, in live debates, at election time? Will they use the new media as tools to become proactive, interactive? Probably just as much as they are ready to participate in the democratic debate offline. By and large they may have the feeling that they are excluded, that they have no influence, that it does not pay to invest oneself in the arcane workings of a parliamentary democracy. I, for one, believe that if you are not prepared to invest yourself, engage yourself, think, communicate, express your opinion, you may as well just stop moaning and complaining. In a democratic system, the citizen has A LOT MORE power than in any other system. If we are not using the power the system invests in us, we should not be astonished if those in power bamboozle us!

Comment2: Submitted by retepower

In my opinion people are very selective, because we choose what we want to see. it's easy to show those platforms in facebook or youtube, but be sure that if it hasn't got something interesting nobody will see them. Besides, a simple debate in facebook would not be interesting, because people are too lazy.

However, if you mix that debate with a multimedia application, an entertaining game or some kind of reward for taking part, perhaps we could involve more people.

The first step in my opinion is to catch people in an entertaining way. Then they will involve or not, but you have caught their attention.



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Forum topic : What is the democratic role of the media?

Comment1: Submitted by [rakelseneca](#)

Internet could help: I think that internet must become the tool to involve young people more actively in the society and in democracy. But how? How can decision makers reach us? how can they listen our needs? We have a very power full tool in our hands but still there is a lack of communication between both sides in the "communication" era.

Comment2: Submitted by retepower

I´m a young person that uses everyday internet as a job-tool and for my day a day social life. I think that Internet is a powerful tool because it develops participatory democracy by creating, websites, forums, blogs... and it contributes toward the main characteristics of participatory democracy, information, interaction and participation.

Forum topic : UK polling day in facebook. 01354900 people on facebook voted



Comment 1: Submitted by [ruthmuir](#)

I definitely think sites like Facebook help to raise awareness among young people, and it is a good and easy way for young people to stay informed. During the election day in the UK the Facebook page Democracy UK was regularly updated and new news stories on polls and polling stations kept flashing up on my news feed. This is clearly not enough to engage people properly, however perhaps it is a step in the right direction to get young people thinking and questioning the current political climate...

Comment 2: Submitted by [nikis](#)

Facebook as a star? I think that such actions are good but won´t raise the number of young voters. The positive side is that for a small number of youngsters this will probably be the first contact with politics and maybe they will get more involved in it.



Comment 3: Submitted by [luka.hrvatin](#)

I agree that using Facebook and the Internet in general is a good way to promote politics but the question is how effective this really is. If you're surfing the net and come across something you don't like or you're not interested into, you simply click "cancel" and the page or ad is gone! And there's another question - do you really think it is good to "force" young people to vote just because they have the right to vote even if they're not interested in politics? Why force somebody to think about politics? Maybe this is just an individual, personal process... you become interested in politics when you think it's the right time for you. When I was 18 I didn't even want to hear about politics but some years ago my point of view completely changed (without anyone "forcing me").

Comment 4: Submitted by [retepower](#)

it's true that facebook could be the first contact with politics. However, the problem is based on the education. A better education in politics, since you are young, would be more effective to achieve the youth vote.

Comment 5: Submitted by [u.hansson](#)

I think it might change the way in which politics are being conducted - could it also work in changing context of politics?

Comment 6: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

While the facebook election poll was an inventive way to remind young people to vote, it was more interesting to see the comments that were posted during the televised prime ministerial debates and as the coalition government emerged. Most of them expressed insightful comments and real concerns but I feel that the young people would not have enough confidence in their political knowledge or that their opinions will be realistically considered to present them to a politician.



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Forum topic : 23th may 2010. Eibar, the first YOUp@ Hearing of, Brankica Petkovic

Brankica Petkovic is Head of the Center for Media Policy at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana and Editor-in-Chief of the Media Watch book series and Media Watch journal.

Discussion on:

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Traditional political procedures and institutions don't see much of youth participation. It seems that youth are more engaged in unconventional politics or simply stay away from politics of any kind. Is it necessary to reform existing democratic procedures and institutions to be more open for voices and real influence of young citizens, or we need more radical change, an invention of new forms and institutions, new system? Are young people willing to articulate their visions of the system in which they would like to live and participate? Are they ready to make even transnational efforts to make our democracies and our societies more open and inclusive?

Comment 1: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

A disengagement from EU politics, don't know who EU rep is. Would the commission be welcoming? Can we really relate to politicians?

Is EU politics still ruled by the elite? It is definitely dominated by economic elites.

Is there a sense that the youth are disengaged from 'ordinary' politics and turn to extremist groups because they specifically are targeting the concerns of young people. Are they giving a sense of identity to those who would not otherwise have had it?

Are we simply too comfortable in our society? We are assured of our rights to medicine, to vote, to education and so, we do not care about the smaller details of quality. We have no other way of expressing ourselves in a political arena that it turns into mass protests which are easily manipulated into violence and can therefore become judged as anti-social.

'No one represents my whole opinion'

Comment 2: Submitted by [j.robins](#)

New media makes you both the maker and the consumer, it has caused the creation of transnational networks and crucially is bridging the gap between local and global communities "glocal". New media is also making people more critical of what they read and can make the truth harder to find. There has been an accelerated speed of information and also an increase in the demand for information. Online petition website are good outcomes of new media but new media can't function without it being coupled with traditional means of engagement. Mouth to Mouth resuscitation for youth participation.



Comment 3: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

We did not agree with the assumption that youth are completely disengaged from political processes but instead are faced with a lack of information with how they can be involved and how processes work. Sometimes we are too comfortable not only in our own lives but with what our governments provide for us for us to become passionate or active about politics. Politics seems far from our everyda lives and is still dominated by certain groups in society.

Comment 4: Submitted by [dni_182](#)

I think that being disengaged with the system is not a synonym of not being active. I think that when you abstent you are saying another opinion which is as valuable as voting: you are saying that you don't support the system. So I think that in many votings the abstent win, so the disengagement with the system is the majority. If this is the wining opinion why do they don't change ? I yhink that they really want us to be disengaged, and I think that is good to be disengaged, the fact should be to find the way (even if it is illegal, out of constitutions ...) to make a better and more friendly world (no european institutions, no big powers in one person ...)

Comment 5: Submitted by [stuartmill.john](#)

What is your system?

You say you are against the system, but do not bother to explain what you would like to replace it with. Isn't that the greatest sign of intellectual laziness?



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Forum topic : 25th may 2010. Eibar, the second YOUp@ Hearing of, Ulf Hansson

General dogsbody at ICR, an independent research organisation in Belfast, Northern Ireland

Discussion on:

SCOPE FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACIES

GROWING DIVERSIFICATION OF THE PATTERNS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION – TOWARDS PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY?

Should we give representative democracy another chance or is the system as we know it 'dead'. If that is the case - are there serious alternatives? If not - is there room for change and if so, what type of change?

Comment 1: Submitted by [neil.hutcheson](#)

Direct democracy is the ideal, whereby we give every citizen a chance to express their own opinion on each and every issue. In reality, this ideal is totally impractical.

Comment 2: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

Ciara and Ruth's thoughts:

Yes, we agree that realistically direct democracy is unworkable. However, there are examples around the world where participatory democracy has been seen to work. For example, in Porto Alegre in Brazil, participatory budgeting has been successfully used. This is the process by which a percentage of the public budget is re-allocated by the local population through a number of monthly deliberative meetings where the general public can participate and influence decisions made on public spending. This scheme has been piloted in the UK and other European countries. However, we think in Europe it is probable that if this type of democracy is to be used it would have to be supported by more traditional democratic systems...

Comment 3: Submitted by [stuartmill.john](#)

Welcome to the cave (wo)men

Participatory democracy also exists in Switzerland. It has lately hit the headlines of most media when a majority of the Swiss population voted in favour of banning the construction of minarets. Those who are usually great advocates of direct democracy on the far left of course immediately rushed to condemn this particular manifestation of their fetish all-purpose-cure. Direct democracy, as a political concept, is as stupid as pretending that we should all clean the streets, cook pasta, drive lorries, cultivate land, write poetry or... sell junk bonds. Human beings discovered centuries ago that progress implies specialisation...



Comment 4: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

Thoughts of Committee One:

We live in an imperfect democracy

We would become more obviously involved if our basic human rights are threatened.

We have concerns over how different minorities people are treated in a large government. eg Basque YP are treated with terrorist legislation for the same crimes as Spanish people.

Politicians work to support their own goals and to strengthen the established political system rather than encouraging criticism, opposition comes from their own political class.

In referendums, voting 'no' is still voting yes for the decision making processes. Therefore, for some people not voting is a political statement, but we cannot assume the same applies for everyone. However, we are unsure if 'spoiling our vote' will be recognised by politicians as an act of political dissatisfaction and could impact on their policies.

We have considered a process of more local decision making, which would address minority rights. More power for local government. But we recognise that there is a necessity to share money/ resources in a national or global arena. Local politics makes it more human.

The media can help to make the world into a global community.

EDUCATION is key

Must we choose between a simple life, of local concerns and a modern life? Because we come from a background of capitalism, it would be difficult to rid ourselves of those trappings.

Can we use a federal system of government that need to be protected by a constitution but would have local level participation?

Town meetings. would we go if they were there? It is difficult to organise local voices when they are lost in large cities.

Comment 5: Submitted by [dni 182](#)

system must die

I think that europe is a manipulator which wants every citizen not be active in an alternative way of the system, they only want us to be active with they key that provide us which aren't useful to make a good change. EUorpean union also makes things like the lisbon treaty, which is a total cut of some rights, and puts the seed to finish someday like U.S.A., but in E.U.R.O.P.E.

So I think don't believe in european institutions (parlmaent, comission, council ...), and I think as the capitalism is falling, the systems which supporting it (like our european "democratic " system) are falling too, and we have to let them die and bury very deep in order for them not wake up again like zombie-capitalist system.



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Forum topic : 25th may 2010. Eibar, the third YOUp@ Hearing of, Brankica Petkovic

Brankica Petkovic is Head of the Center for Media Policy at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana and Editor-in-Chief of the Media Watch book series and Media Watch

Discussion on:

MEDIA AND YOUTH
YOUTH DISENGAGEMENT WITH THE NEWS
ALTERNATIVE MEDIA
TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL AND MEDIA ACTIVISM

Comment 1: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

'Old' Media does not encourage us to be active; New Media would create dialogue, compared to the old media. If the media is the tool of the politicians, can the media say they are objective?

If youth don't have basic knowledge of political processes, new media can't make politics interesting for youth it remains beyond their interest. And, while the media can create more transparency in politics it can form gossip and scandals. It is important to provide young people with the tools to be critical of the information they receive.

Comment 2: Submitted by [sara.ni.chuireain](#)

My thoughts:

- To get the youth to engage we need to engage the youth. Not just through new media but through traditional media and meeting people face to face.
- New media is a good start but that is only a foundation, a way to reach the masses but to get them to fully engage, we need other means.
- I think that in terms of making a statement something more physical is more effective.

Comment 3: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

New media is a great way of creating a global community and making global politics locally relevant however, I find the problem is the huge amount of information that is available through new media and how we are able to differentiate between what is factually correct and what has been exaggerated. The best way to help young people differentiate for themselves is to offer them a higher level of understanding through education.

Comment 4: Submitted by [sara.ni.chuireain](#)

I agree with you on this point, we do need to educate our children and youth to understand how to read, and make decisions on what is fact and what is fiction.



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I also think it is good and important to see both side of story before you judge, or make up your opinion. Try and understand where they are coming from and then may an educated decision

Forum topic : 27 May 2010. YOUp@ in the BASQUE PARLIAMENT

Intervention of the following MPs:

Jone Berriozabal-**PNV**
Leire Corrales-**PNV**
Oxez Erostarbe-**Aralar**
Cristina Gonzalez-**PSOE**
Aitor Casado-**PSOE**
Carmelo Barrios-**PP**

Discussions on:

Zabalik-an open on-line space for citizens in the Basque Parliament

MPs and their contribution in the on-line social networks and blogs

Comment 1: Submitted by [retepower](#)

politicians have blogs...

Some of the politicians have blogs, facebook pages...

The parliament have an on-line information page for citizens to get informed...but I wonder if those are made in an attractive way.

Are the institutional websites user-friendly?or completely not?Does having a Blog mean to be nearer from the citizens or does it depend in who is looking and following your blog and whose blog are you cheking?

In my opinion is not only to be or to appear in the new internet social networks or pages the solution, I personally think that they also must know how to use the tools and how reach to the targets trough this new media.

Comment 1: Submitted by [ruthmuir](#)

We had a very interesting day visiting the Basque Parliament in Vittoria. We met with a representative who explained the workings of the Parliament and who gave us an in depth description of the uses of the Parliament's website. They suggested this was a good tool for Basque citizens to gain information on goings on in the Parliament and to access their archives, including online videos and live discussions and debates. There were, however, some reservations from YOUp@ at the true usefulness of the website, and questions over whether it would really help to engage Basque youth. In the afternoon we met with 6 MPs and questioned them over their engagement of youth in the democratic process in Basque, again questions came up over whether youth were or were not engaged and how this could be changed... It



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did not appear that any of the politicians had any concrete explanations or solutions for the near future...

Comment 3: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

I think sometimes we are too harsh on politicians, they are human after all! I was impressed that they did have a website that existed to give information to their constituents; at least they have the right intention!. But I have to question how much we are expecting them to do for us; we have the ability to read and form our own opinions do we really expect them to spoon-feed information to us? Perhaps we should be taking more responsibility for our own lack of participation, it is very easy for us to complain but do we ever offer any realistic alternatives to the current policies?

Comment 3: Submitted by [dni_182](#)

politics = lazy. I have to say that I am a bit impressed that some people think that politicians do they best, this are my opinions after having seen the lazy politics of the parliament:

- Of course they are humans, but they are dressed like politics, so their work is not to answer properly and be very abstract. I am sure that the ones who debated with use where good persons but as they were politics they didn't answered nothing to my questions.

- I really think that they are very lazy, they complained because they sometimes went out of the job at 7 in the afternoon, because they had to work some Mondays and Tuesdays. And after all their salary is 70.000 € !!!!!!! And maybe some of you were impressed because they accepted to talk with us, but is their work, and in a real democracy that should happen every time. And of course they shouldn't have answered the kind of garbage that they answered to my questions, I should have preferred them to stay silent.

- To finish the day we saw the plenary session, and it really was a circus. Some politics on internet, other making drawings, other ones coming out of the room ... and all of this was happening while each time one politics was talking to everybody their speech. what a lack of respect !! Why do we have to support this kind of circus-institutions like parliament ??

Comment 4: Submitted by [stuartmill.john](#)

What were your questions? Would you like to share the questions you asked to Basque politicians with us?

Comment 5: Submitted by [sara.ni.chuireain](#)

The Basque Parliament trip

I agree with you to some extent about them being people after all, but I think they need to remember that themselves also. At the end of the day, they too are citizens, and we sometimes forget this which creates a divide between us.



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"if you put a dress on a goat, it's still a goat!" - Old Irish Saying

I think we all, both us as citizens and them as politicians, need to remember this. We need to bridge the gap that we feel, think, imagine is there between us.

I also found our trip to the Basque Parliament really interesting, but it highlighted this 'gap' in my opinion.

Forum topic: 25th may 2010. Eibar, 5th Hearing of Snezana Stabi

Snezana Stabi is a media expert in Slovenia-KIBLA

Discussion on:

THE DEMOCRATIC POTENTIAL OF INTERNET

Comment 1: Submitted by [ciaraburch](#)

Some thoughts to consider

Ciara and Ruth's thoughts so far:

Positive:

Behind a computer screen everyone is equal and each opinion is as valid as the next. It's using the language and tools of those who are disengaged (the youth). It reaches beyond geographical borders, creates transnational networks and takes the local to the global.

Negative:

No overwhelming regulation of what is posted, depending on the website
Little accountability for what is posted
Direct dialogue is not necessarily entered into, potentially leading to the issue losing focus.
It is necessary to use internet source critically, which is not always going to be the case.
What are your thoughts?

Comment 2: Submitted by [stuartmill.john](#)

A great facilitator of grassroots democracy that can be abused

There are pros and cons as usual... but it is undeniable that the Internet has been a fantastic force of democratisation. You can see it best in countries where democracy does not exist. The Internet is so democratic that it even offers a great channel to all those who are against democracy... those who cannot /do not want to put up with a situation where all are free to express their opinion AND, after having done so, build consensus around positions that are



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acceptable for a majority. As such, the internet is a tool that, like all tools, can be used and/or abused. Can we imagine to live without it? I certainly not.

Comment 3: Submitted by [dni_182](#)

lack of humanism

Maybe internet has got many democratical potential, but I think that we are missing one important thing, in internet there is a lack of humanism, people learn how to flirt online by not to flirt face to face, for some shy persons internet makes them even more shy ... And I think that the web is the best source to be well informed and to search for your information (in order to not depend on the big tv channels liars), but we have to be aware this big lack of humanity which creates



Blog Discussion: Democracy is or is not couch potato?

Democracy is nice, everybody feel free to comment everything etc... And also i can agree that representative democracy is necessity. But of the end of debates we have elections, where we can only choose between offered choices? Is this freedom of choice? Or we have positiveley conotated freedom and negatively conotated freedom?

Blog Discussion: Youth Culture, democracy and the media

Media (il)lteracy in youth culture is important for many reasons, and a light-hearted treatment of the effect of the mass media in the educational sector can lead to undesirable outcomes.

The following paper talks about how two teacher-educators use the mass media in their teaching to stimulate reflection and engagement on the part of present and future teachers.

Blog Discussion: Are representative democracy and participative democracy mutually exclusive?

Certainly not! Representative democracy is a necessity. It is simply impossible to imagine a system in which everybody would decide everything. Therefore, the decision making power



invested in each individual must be delegated to a "representative". The correlation is that the person who gives the mandate must control how his/her representative acts on his/her behalf. The mere act of controlling would already imply "participation". Most people shy away from involving themselves already at this stage. Indeed, controlling implies understanding, formulating and discussing ideas, creating and maintaining a relationship between oneself and the person (Councilor, MP, etc.) to whom one gives a mandate. Participative democracy appears therefore as an ideal, which everybody talks about but very few are prepared to take seriously.

Blog Discussion: War to win over Britain's first-time voters (3 comments)



retepower May 11, 2010 at 7:46 pm | #1 Reply | Quote

In Britain young people is not interested in politics. It's true that they don't have a wide ideological variety to vote. In my opinion the strategy is based on the new social media, something interesting and attractive could help to the first-time voters. The participation should reach to the streets, you can't involve only clicking in your computer.



ruthmuir May 17, 2010 at 12:31 pm | #2 Reply | Quote

Perhaps it is not just that all young people are uninterested in politics, but also that they have been alienated from the democratic process in the UK. A reasonably recent independent report in the UK, 'The Power Inquiry', looks into this and considers what they call the 'myth of apathy'. It contends that the deeper cause for disengagement can be attributed to the fact that the structure of the British political system remains much as it did in the Industrial era; a time of deference, rigid hierarchy and static social relations in which the main political parties' interests and ideological leanings focussed on two dominant classes. Not surprisingly the British public, especially the younger generations, therefore currently feel alienated from formal democratic processes which are unable to respond to their diverse and complex values and interests in Britain's contemporary post-industrial society.. What does everyone think to this?



stuartmilljohn May 17, 2010 at 5:41 pm | #3 Reply | Quote

@ruthmuir

That some young people may feel excluded from the political system in the UK, I can easily understand. However, is it not too simple to blame their general apathy entirely on the "system"? The UK may have institutions that reach back a long time and that

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may not appear “modern” in the 21st century – because the media say so. There are other systems that are much more recent, e.g. the regimes that have succeeded the so-called “popular democracies” in Central and Eastern Europe less than 20 years ago. Is there any evidence that young people are fully involved in these “young” democracies? To my mind, the real cause of disengagement is lack of time or... sheer laziness. It costs time and effort to inform oneself, to think, to confront one’s ideas to others, to go to political meetings (in the widest sense), etc. Few can/want to make available the time it takes to “participate”.

Blog Discussion: Participating requires being informed

Participating in a democratic process means being informed. Most people do not bother informing themselves. For my part, I have chosen to follow closely what the European institutions are up to and how they impact our lives. Here are a few websites that provide news from a European perspective:

- **EurActiv**: general news about the EU
- **EUObserver**: general news about the EU and national news relevant from a broader European perspective
- **VoteWatch**: this website tracks all activities of all members of the European Parliament – a very nice tool to inform oneself about what our individual MEPs are up to
- **Notre Europe**: a think tank founded by **Jacques Delors**, former President of the European Commission – many interesting and thoughtful contributions (for French speakers!) – a list of think tanks throughout Europe is available **here**.
- The Centre for European Policy Studies (**CEPS**): another European think tank



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