

Problem identification

DIG-CIT focuses on studying participation of the young generation as digitally literate and relatively disinterested in institutional policy, who rarely participate in elections while being the most digitally active. Digital citizenship is introduced as a perspective that links citizens to politics so that they can recognize themselves not only as bearers but also as authors of policies. In analysing the complexity of political action DIG-CIT researches the possibilities of including citizens' activities in policy-making. The question on one hand is how to make sense of or address the dispersed online voices to increase their impact on the established authorities while, on the other it is, how to sensibilise the authorities to better recognise the relevance of people's political activity for the democratisation of societies, and to develop mechanisms for horizontal communication.

Aims, relevance and impact

DIG-CIT aims to offer an innovative conceptual framework for the study of digital citizenship which will create new knowledge through research and offer proposals for policy-making oriented towards achieving the maximum public potential in political action at the local, national and global levels. Its aims are formed at three levels: 1. At the theoretical level its aim is to conceptualize digital citizenship as a concept understanding politics as a dynamic interaction at the intersection of online and offline environments. 2. At the empirical/methodological level, its aim is to sharpen the empirical approach to research into digital citizenship through policy and concept analysis based on thematic research and the use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, and by introducing new methods. 3. At the developmental level, its aim is to encourage deliberative politics created in interaction rather than separation processes involving »strong«, institutional, and »weak«, non-institutional publics, and encouraging political empowerment of individuals and groups.

Research methods and originality

In our approach to digital citizenship we use thematic research for studying youth political activity, their relationship towards institutional politics as well as creation of a new politics within civil society initiatives or alternative uses of media. DIG-CIT researches the complexity of political action at three intersections: 1. Institutional and non-institutional; 2. Real and virtual; and 3. Facilitation and obstruction factors. Our approach to »innovating« citizenship addresses the specific practices of groups formed in relation to the established politics and beyond, at the intersection of online and offline environments and in the context of online hierarchies. To achieve its aims the project uses diverse qualitative and quantitative research methods, including interviews and focus groups, textual analysis, online interaction analysis, communication diary and surveys.