*Mitja HAFNER FINK, Tanja OBLAK ČRNIČ**

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AS MULTIPLE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION? PREDICTORS OF DIGITAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN SLOVENIA

Abstract. *A significant decreasing trend in political participation could be observed in so-called Western democracies in the last decades of the 20th century. In this framework, researchers largely agree on the key factors of participation: from generational differences and socio-economic status through civic values to civic competencies. The emergence and expansion of the Internet have brought new opportunities to expand political participation practices and to include in these practices certain groups which have so far been less active. By analysing the presence of various forms of participation via the Internet in Slovenia, we assess a thesis on the (possible) expansion of space for political participation and search for answer(s) to research questions about the relationship between traditional forms of political participation in general and digital forms of participation: a) are online forms merely combining with other traditional forms of participation; or b) are they emerging as a new type of political participation? We also investigate whether digital participation does indeed involve new groups of people and who are potential 'digital citizens'. In the analysis, we use the latest data from the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey 2013, which includes both information on the forms of political participation generally and information on digital-specific forms of participation.*

Keywords: *general vs. digital political participation, typology of political participation, representative quantitative survey, predictors of participation, digital citizens*

* *Mitja Hafner-Fink, PhD, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Political Sciences; Tanja Oblak Črnič, PhD, Associate Professor at Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Ljubljana.*

Introduction

It was already Buchstein in the early 1990s who clearly pointed out the strong relationship between political participation and primary technology: "Whether we consider face-to-face communication in early democracies, the 'republic of letters', the invention of printed books, leaflets and newspapers, or telephone, radio and television, it is clear that all had and have impacted upon both the modes and the results of political interaction" (Buchstein 1997: 248). Nevertheless, Arterton was one of the first authors to stress the emergence of "participation technologies" as new forms of *mediated political participation*. Writing in the late 1980s, his set of new participation mechanisms included (Arterton, 1987: 38–42): televised call-in formats – systems which connect one-point-to-mass broadcasting with mass-to-one-point telephone feedback, similar to radio talk shows where a moderator or a guest answers questions posed by listeners or viewers; mail-back ballots for stimulating citizens to participate in public by sending their opinions, comments or suggestions in the form of specially printed ballots; interactive cable television, offering viewers some means to answer questions by pressing a button on a special remote control; teleconferencing and videoconferencing, used for a smaller, limited number of physically unconnected people who participate in political discussions through video or audio channels; and, finally, computer conferencing and electronic mail and videotext.

Since then a large number of new technical affordances has emerged in practice, causing not just the proliferation of new political actors and potential activation of civil society, but also opening many theoretical consideration and empirical studies in relation to the effects of new media on political participation. As technology becomes interactive, accessible and easy to use, together with its expanding use, new possibilities for participation are opening up. Consequently, political participation can be understood more widely: along with practices that are not necessarily technologically dependent such as voting, signing a petition, organising a protest etc., a set of new digital forms is appearing that can reach a larger share of the population in much faster ways. Computer-mediated technology and especially computer-mediated communication are an excellent starting point for expanding and strengthening participation in political processes, but what remains the most important challenge is how to make access to technology easier and more inclusive (Oblak, 2003b). Such changes bring additional challenges to the understanding of citizenship. Being an active citizen today is not limited to traditional (offline) forms of participation, but it must also include – theoretically and empirically – the question of active online participation: today, most political actors and political institutions 'live' online on their websites, Facebook (FB)

profiles and other digital settings. However, not all digitally mediated forms of uses are necessarily active: being 'active online' means more than simply browsing websites or social network sites (cf. Krueger, 2002).

Within this framework, this text focuses on the association between general forms of political participation (those not dependent on new digital technologies) and the new digital forms of political participation that are being exercised online together with an empirical analysis that follows the three main research questions: 1) Is there a group of citizens that expresses an interest in politics only through new online activities?; 2) Which general forms of political participation are more likely to be (further) stimulated by using the Web and the Internet? 3) Which are the main predictors of exercising digital forms of political participation via the web[1] and, more specifically, which population groups are more likely to participate in this way? In order to provide answers to these questions, we used data from the Slovenian Public Opinion (SPO) survey which was conducted in autumn 2013 on a representative sample of the adult Slovenian population.

Digitalisation as an expansion of political participation

At its core, political participation means the opportunity for private citizens to affect decision-making processes within different spheres of social life. From the citizens' perspective, the idea of or demand for greater political participation is usually related to the expectation of being able to more effectively influence decisions taken by the government or the administrative system (Fuchs, Guido Rossi and Svensson, 1998: 324). Yet, political participation should not be understood as a one-dimensional but as a multidimensional activity (see Verba et al., 1978), which includes the interplay of various forms of action with different ways of operation and different goals of action. Such an understanding also means that political participation should be regarded as a concept in which "the boundaries between what constitutes participation and what does not are often unclear" (Anduzia et al., 2009: 4). This ties in closely with the point made already by Norris and Curtice (2006: 6) that we need to understand the multidimensional nature of political activism and how this interacts with the characteristics of Internet users.

When investigating forms of political participation in the context of the processes of democratisation and modernisation, researchers have largely focused their attention on a dimension of political participation labelled by the dichotomy of 'conventional' vs. 'unconventional' (or protest)

[1] *Here we refer to forms of political participation that take place via the Internet and other digital media; as a consequence, in the text the following three terms are used interchangeably: 'Internet (forms of) participation', 'on-line (forms of) participation' and 'digital (forms) of participation'.*

participation (e.g. Barnes, 2006; Newton & Montero, 2007). This dimension reflects the distinction between forms of political participation which usually take place in institutional (system) frameworks (e.g. voting at elections, activities within political parties, communicating with politicians and civil servants), and forms that typically take place outside institutional (system) frameworks in an informal, more individualised and sporadic way (various forms of protest, political consumerism, network mobilisation etc.) (e.g. Dalton, 1996; Stolle et al., 2005; van Deth, 2009). This dimension is also present in our analysis where we expect that conventional and unconventional forms of political participation are related to digital forms of participation in different ways.

A tendency towards increased political participation is expressed in the ambition to open political processes up to the population at large by letting citizens vote directly on matters currently reserved for Parliament (Budge, 1996: 24). A general definition of participation, for instance that it includes "taking part in the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies" (Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992: 16) is insufficient in this sense. According to Budge, it does not include other forms of interaction between a citizen and public authority, such as filling in tax forms or visiting an office to claim welfare benefits, nor does it take account of information on public issues (researching books or statistics, reading newspapers, listening to or watching news or discussing with friends or family). Modern technologies offer an entrance into political processes, discussions and voting on issues which are now reserved for members of Parliament. Or, as Grossman says, "The electronic republic cannot be as intimate or as deliberative as the face-to-face discussions and showing of hands in the ancient Athenians' open-air assemblies. But it is likely to extend government decision making from the few in the centre of power to the many on the outside who may wish to participate" (Grossman, 1995: 49).

The extension of new communication technologies to different social settings has significantly changed many processes (Oblak, 2003b): *our styles of communication*: with computer-mediated communication we can develop interpersonal, asynchronous but also one-to-many or even many-to-many, and synchronous types of communication, which are much more common in group settings and mass communication forms; *opinion expression*: the interactive nature of computer-mediated communication enables the creation of new discussion for and other forms of two-way opinion expressions (such as blogs or Twitter posts), where individuals can exchange their opinions and listen to others' views, sometimes even without revealing their own real identities in public; *understanding of political actions*: the development of computer-mediated communication practices has opened up new methods of political participation (writing an e-mail to politicians, delivering

a petition online, inviting others to become politically mobilised through SMS or Facebook profiles etc.); *composition of political alliances*: through computer-mediated discussions, specialised groups of interests are formed, propagating their own political preferences and aims, inviting new supporters or potential members; *the way we interact with political institutions*: the emergence of the Internet and online social media established a different picture of political actors within the new mediated political platform, representing their own political programmes, proposals and concrete decisions, and thus enabling better information and more direct access to their work. Such digitally provided political practices are potentially reaching new audiences which for various reasons have been excluded from general forms of political participation.

Figure 1: TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

	Conventional	Unconventional
GENERAL/ TRADITIONAL	• Institutional framework • Regular, formal • Voting, activities within political parties, contacting politicians etc.	• Civic framework • Sporadic, informal • Forms of protest, political consumerism, mobilisations etc.
DIGITAL/ ONLINE	• Extended to online forms of communication and digital media • Institutionalised context • E-voting, browsing political websites, following a politician on FB etc.	• Extended to online communication and digital media • Civic context • Online protest, online mobilisation, building online forums and associations etc.

Expanding the idea of participation practices to the new digital or interactive patterns established through the new information services and computer communication facilities has been challenging existing understandings of the idea itself since the first project with e-democracy in early 1980 (Oblak, 2003a). Along with the implementation of new computer technologies within the existing political frameworks, it has been argued that new digital forms of political action or participation are emerging (Grossman, 1995; Barber, 1984) where political activities are made easier to set up and more comfortable (see Figure 1). Moreover, the conditions and circumstances of collective political activities are reshaped and new forms of politics based on horizontal rather than merely vertical communication flows are being established with the help of digital media. Even though new digital technologies can support both institutionalised (e.g. voting, contacting civil servants) and individualised (e.g. signing petitions, horizontal networking), some research results show that this support is strongly reflected in individualised forms of participation (Oblak, 2003a; Norris and Curtis, 2006).

Already in the late 1990s, Davis and Owen (1998) claimed that the predominant computer network – the Internet at that time – performs at least *four political functions*: 1) to access news and political information, most of which was previously not as easily available; 2) to link public officials and citizens through government and other political websites; 3) to provide a forum for political discussion; and 4) to act as a public opinion gauge with the potential to offer immediate reactions to events and decisions (Davis and Owen, 1998: 113). Later on, these participation capacities were largely expanded to other technical platforms following the emergence of the so-called Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 (see the paper by Oblak Črnič and Prodnik in this issue). Many novelties, like blogging and microblogging, Facebook profiles, Twitter posts, and other social media practices are embedded in their special technological attributes: easy access to information; individual composition and distribution of information; interactivity; and constant communication embedded in selective but effective visual information. Along with the rise of such potential, it is also necessary to analyse the established (general) forms of political participation in accordance with these digital practices.

However, some authors argue that when we talk about changes in political communication and participation provided through online media we need to distinguish their effects on three types of activity: those which are *only* possible online, those which can be carried out *equally offline and online*, and those which can *only* be carried out *offline* (Anduzia et al., 2009: 4). The bridge between the traditional or 'only offline' forms and the digital or 'only online' forms represents a complex set of those practices that can be equally well done in online and offline settings. Related to such assumptions is a serious conceptual problem: "we need theoretical proposals concerning which online activities can be considered as new forms of political participation, typologies of participation modes that incorporate the online dimension, and systematic comparisons of online and offline participation" (2009: 5). The aim of this paper is to also accelerate this need in empirical research of political participation by trying to identify the new online political practices and, together with them, the new digital citizens who choose on one hand only digital forms of participation and, secondly, those who combine offline practices with online ones.

However, the new political opportunities that derive from online settings in practice face many obstacles that have to be taken into consideration. *First, the problem of access* – yet the so-called direct or more participatory forms of democracy presuppose, for instance: a) that technology is easy to use, accessible to all and interactive; b) that through technology the concept of a good citizen is being cultivated; and c) that with the help of technology more active involvement in the decision-making process is developing. In this sense, many authors (Barber, 1984; Grossman, 1995; Budge,

1996) believed that projects involving electronic democracy would help solve the lack of education and civic values among the citizenry, that they would transform an apathetic public into an active citizenry, and improve the existing disconnect between the governing elite and the general public. But, in general, a new computer network, like the Internet is today, is still more a privilege than a right. However, in Slovenia, for example, there was almost 74% of population (524.287 inhabitants) in 2012 with the Internet access, while in 2004 this percentage was much lower (47% of population, data taken from SURS). But as it was shown in the recent study on Class and Culture (see Oblak Črnič, 2013: 935), the computer and the internet are not equally distributed within the population: a majority over the age of 60 lack the internet access (60.4%) as do more than half of those with the lowest level of education (56.2%); on the other side, more than 90% of the upper class have computers and internet at home. We can thus agree with Wilhelm (2000) that these communication media are disturbing democracy by exacerbating socio-economic inequalities and the uneven distribution of technological capacity already prevalent in market-oriented societies (Wilhelm, 2000: 4–5). In this sense, supplying technological solutions to what are fundamentally political problems, in part related to the distribution of resources, skills, and the essential means of communication, cannot solve the problems of society (Wilhelm, 2000: 6). Applying such a dilemma to political participation also means acknowledging another relevant contra-factual question, as done by Anduzia et al (2009: 5): would those who participate online have participated offline if they had not had access to the Internet? If people who are normally inactive become active the volume of participation increases, but if traditional methods are simply replaced by those offered online then the volume of activity remains stable.

Second, the problem of activity extensions: Many authors argue that the Internet is mostly attractive to those media consumers who constitute the more politically active part of the population and who are already more interested in political issues. Hill and Hughes' analysis of the differences between the Internet user and the Internet activist, for instance, already in the early 1990s showed that Internet activists engage much more in information- seeking online and utilise a wider variety of other online sources than other Internet users (1998: 38). A decade later, Anduzia et al. (2009) drew a similar conclusion by saying that the Internet also offers an alternative medium for carrying out political activities beyond the scope of the general institutional actors, and therefore facilitates the use of the "new repertoires" that are emerging both offline and online (2009: 7). In their opinion, two arguments justify this hypothesis (2009: 7–8). First, some characteristics favour certain activities over others, like for instance single-issue mobilisation (Sunstein, 2003). Second, these same characteristics have helped

certain actors adapt more quickly and effectively to the Internet. "For all of these reasons, disaffected members of citizenry seeking a participative strategy can find in the internet an alternative that constitutes a means of stimulating the emergence of new modes of participation, thus accentuating the divorce from conventional politics" (Frau-Meigs, 2002 in Anduzia et al., 2009).

In line with these limitations, Anduzia et al. stress the importance of the differences between *inequality of access* and *inequality of participation* once access to the Internet has been achieved (Anduzia, 2009: 19; Best and Krueger, 2005). Political participation is not equal among the population, and activists come from more privileged sectors of society. Moreover, Internet access is not equal among the population and is concentrated among young people and more privileged groups. On the other hand, young people represent one of the least participative sectors for many traditional activities; if the Internet does promote their political involvement, then the expected effects may include a reduction of inequalities (Anduzia, 2009: 20).

To sum up: the political exercise of an active citizen today is not just limited to traditional offline settings but must also include the question of additional digital political venues. Such practices, however, are not equally spread within populations and not evenly available within the political online sphere. In addition, online political practices vary internally in their potential effects. This also means that different forms (types) of political participation in general (e.g. conventional vs. unconventional) are related differently to various new digital forms of (political) participation. Having this in mind, empirical research within the field of political participation should also acknowledge specific types of participation which tend to attract specific groups of citizens.

Empirical study: Who are digitally active citizens in the Slovenian context?

Analytical model, data and methods

We formed our analytical model based on research findings on developments in the field of political participation over the past few decades, which have been marked by the last (third) wave of democratisation (especially after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe). We can see a decline in conventional political participation not only in the old (consolidated) democracies, but also in the new democracies of the post-socialist world (e.g. Barnes, 2006; Kluegel and Mason, 1999; Wattenberg, 1998; Dalton, 1996; Putnam, 1995). However, especially in more developed countries with the highest democracy scores we can also see the emergence of new forms

of civic action and an increase in the volume of non-conventional (or protest) and individualised forms of political participation (e.g. Dalton, 2008; Barnes, 2006; Dalton and van Sickle, 2005; Dalton, 1996). These are political activities that usually take place outside of institutional channels and include various forms of pressure and the expression of demands for modern-type politics (signing petitions, participation in boycotts, non-authorised demonstrations and strikes, the occupation of buildings etc.). It is also about political or civic actions which are not primarily founded on a particular ideology or a political project, but often emerge from the everyday priorities of individual citizens (e.g. Bang & Soerensen, 2001; Bang, 2004). These activities are frequently supported by new digital forms of communication.

Various research findings on political participation consistently show that education is the most important individual resource for both conventional and unconventional political participation – and there is no difference between old and new democracies (e.g. Barnes, 2006; Deželan et al., 2007; Li & Marsh, 2008). Yet when it comes to other factors we cannot talk about such consistency. Although women are more likely to vote at elections, we can still see a gender gap regarding non-electoral participation – women are less likely to be active (e.g. Burns et al., 2001; Barnes, 2006). Age is seen as another important factor that usually has different effects for various forms of participation: the oldest differ with a higher level of conventional participation (especially when it comes to elections), while the younger stand out with a higher degree of unconventional (or protest) participation (e.g. Li & Marsh, 2008; Hafner-Fink, 2010).

In this framework, our research interest is focused on the forms of political participation that are being exercised in a digital context through the Internet. Our main research question is the following: *Is the Internet expanding the space for political participation?* This question is further broken down into the following sub-questions:

- Is there a group of citizens who express an interest in politics only online?
- Which forms of political participation in general are more likely to be (further) stimulated online?
- Which population groups are more likely to be involved in digital political participation?

To answer these questions, we use data from the Slovenian Public Opinion (SPO) survey, more precisely, the Slovenian Public Opinion 2013 survey (SJM 2013) which was conducted in autumn 2013 on a representative sample of the adult Slovenian population.[2] Both the forms of political participa-

[2] *A two-stage stratified random sample based on Central Register of Population was used. Data were collected by computer assisted face-to-face interviews during the period from October 2nd 2013 to December 17th 2013. Initial sample size was 1800, while the realized sample includes 1010 respondents (Hafner-Fink et al., 2014).*

tion in general and the online forms of participation are measured with two separate batteries of questions (see Table 1):

a. The first battery is part of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2014 Citizenship module.[3] It taps into various *general forms of participation*, conventional and unconventional (protest), and also includes one item specifically for online participation. These forms are as follows: signing a petition; boycotting or buying products for political, ethical or environmental reasons; taking part in a demonstration; attending a political meeting; contacting (or trying to contact) a politician (or civil servant); donating money or raising funds; contacting (or appearing in) the media; expressing political views on the Internet. Most forms are not limited to an online or offline environment. There are only three obvious exceptions among them: a) expressing political views on the Internet, which is an online practice per se; and b) taking part in a demonstration and attending a political meeting, which are basically offline practices, although they can be supported by online practices.
b. The second battery is part of the SPO national survey module and only includes *online forms of participation*: commenting on an article on a web portal; following current political events on Facebook, Twitter or similar media; sending a message with political content via Facebook, Twitter etc.; visiting a web page of a political party; inclusion in an interest group through online networks. Internet activities in this battery support three (of the four) political functions mentioned by Davis and Owen (1998) – provide access to news and political information, provide a forum for political discussion, and act as a public opinion gauge, although they do not explicitly cover the fourth function of linking public officials and citizens. The listed forms of activities can also be related to various general forms of political activism mentioned by Norris and Curtis (2006): voting, campaign activities, cause-oriented activities, civic-oriented activities.

In both batteries, respondents were asked to report their participation in the last 12 months for each of the listed activities.

[3] *"The ISSP is a continuing annual programme of cross-national collaboration on surveys covering topics important for social science research" (retrieved from: http://www.issp.org/, 5 July 2014). Slovenia (through the Centre for Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research) has been part of the ISSP since 1991 and has fielded all the ISSP modules since then. The Citizenship module was fielded for the first time in Slovenia in 2003.*

Table 1: FORMS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION – PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS ACTIVE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS (IN %)

A) general or traditional forms	
Unconventional or *protest forms:*	
– Boycotting, or buying, products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	15.3
– Signing a petition	13.8
– Taking part in a demonstration	7.7
Conventional forms:	
– Donating money or raising funds for a social or political activity	9.6
– Contacting a politician or a civil servant to express views	4.6
– Attending a political meeting or rally	4.1
– Contacting (or appearing in) the media to express views	2.3
B) digital or online forms	
– Following current political events on Facebook, Twitter or similar media	24.9
– Commenting on an article on a web portal	19.3
– Visiting the web page of a political party	12.4
– Inclusion in an interest group through online networks	11.1
– Sending a message with political content via Facebook, Twitter etc.	7.0
– Expressing political views on the Internet	5.3

Source: SJM 2013 (see Toš &Vovk eds., 2014)

Using these two measurements, we constructed four (composite) variables of political participation for further analyses:

- *conventional participation:* attending a political meeting; contacting a politician; donating money or fundraising; contacting the media;
- *protest (unconventional or individualised) participation:* boycotting; signing a petition; taking part in a demonstration;
- *general participation:* which includes all conventional and protest forms from the previous two variables; and
- *digital participation:* expressing political views on the Internet; commenting on an article on a web portal; following politics on FB, Twitter etc.; sending a message with political content via FB, Twitter etc.; visiting the webpage of a political party; inclusion in an interest group through online networks.

All four were prepared as binary variables: 0 – no participation; 1 – participation in at least one of the forms included in a variable.

Bearing in mind the research questions and available data from the SJM 2013 survey, we express our expectations in the form of the following four hypotheses:

H1: There is a group of citizens who realise their interest in politics exclusively through online activities.

H2: Individualised (protest) forms of participation are more likely to be further stimulated by online forms of political participation.

H3: The younger population is more likely to be politically active via the Internet.

H4: The highly educated population is more likely to be politically active online.

To test the hypotheses we employed analyses for nominal data. We used *contingency tables* (a) to analyse associations between general forms of participation and digital participation, and (b) to develop a classification (typology) of citizens regarding their use of general forms and online forms of participation. We applied a *binary logistic regression* to analyse the general forms of participation and demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, place of residence) as predictors of online political participation.

Typology of participation: General forms vs. digital participation

For an adequate understanding of the results of the analyses, it is important to first look at some general information about the presence of the Internet as revealed in data from the SJM 2013 survey. In particular, the following two aspects are important: a) approximately four-fifths of respondents (79.3%) have Internet access at home, and b) approximately 60% of respondents use the Internet daily.

We started with the idea that involvement in general forms of political participation is associated with involvement in digital forms of political participation. However, in line with our first hypothesis we also expect that this association is not 'perfect', namely we can find (a) a substantial share of individuals participating via the Internet but not in other (general) forms of participation, and (b) a substantial proportion of those who are involved solely in 'traditional' forms of political participation and do not use online forms of participation. By combining both forms of participation we developed a typology of citizens (see Table 2). The result shows that still approximately half the population is excluded from any form of political activism (we do not count voting at elections and following politics in the mass media). The analysis also supports our *first hypothesis*: 16.6% of the respondents only use digital-specific forms of participation. It is therefore appropriate to argue that the Internet is expanding the space of political participation. We may ask whether this is only the first step towards political participation in general (also including offline practices), or whether it is in fact a completely new style of political participation. Given the fact that the largest group among the active respondents is the one with a combination of both types (18.6%), we can assume that it is hard to imagine any political participation in the future that does not involve use of the Internet. More than one-third of the respondents (35.2%) (two-thirds of active respondents) therefore engage in specific online forms of participation and hardly

one-sixth (15.4%) (one-third of active respondents) exclusively engage in general ('traditional') forms (Table 2).

Table 2: COMBINATION OF GENERAL AND DIGITAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION – TYPOLOGY (IN %)

No participation	*49.4*
Only general forms of participation:	*15.4*
– Only conventional participation	(4.6)
– Only protest participation	(8.4)
– A combination of conventional and protest participation	(2.4)
Only digital participation	*16.6*
A combination of general and online participation:	*18.6*
– digital & conventional participation	(3.0)
– digital & protest participation	(10.2)
– digital participation & both general forms (conventional + protest)	(5.4)

Source: own calculations based on SJM 2013 data

In general, we can see a positive association between the general and online forms of political participation: among those who use Internet forms of participation there is a statistically significant higher probability of both conventional and protest participation (Table 3). The only exception is voting at elections, where we cannot see any significant difference between those who use and those who do not use online political participation forms. However, it seems that digital participation more strongly supports the protest forms than conventional forms of political participation – in this respect, boycotts of products and signing petitions stand out (Table 3). This finding is in line with our *second hypothesis*, which says that individualised (protest) forms of participation are more likely to be further stimulated by the use of online forms of political participation than conventional (or 'institutionalised') participation forms.

Table 3: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL AND DIGITAL PARTICIPATION – RESULTS OF BIVARIATE ANALYSIS (PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS USING GENERAL FORMS OF PARTICIPATION, IN %)

General forms of participation:	online participation			
	No	Yes	χ^2	Cramer's V
– Conventional (composed variable)	10.7	23.9	30.791	0.175
– Protest (composed variable)	16.7	44.4	91.052	0.300
– Signing a petition	7.5	25.3	61.461	0.247
– Boycotting products	8.4	28.1	68.724	0.261
– Taking part in a demonstration	4.4	13.8	28.157	0.167
– Attending a political meeting or rally	2.6	6.7	10.155	0.100
– Contacting a politician or a civil servant	2.6	8.1	16.315	0.127
– Donating money or raising funds	7.2	14.0	12.490	0.111
– Contacting or appearing in the media	1.1	4.5	12.145	0.110
– Voted at last national elections	75.4	75.8	*0.021	0.005

* only this association is not statistically significant, all others are significant at $p < 0.01$
Source: own calculations based on SJM 2013 data

Predictors of digital political participation

We used bivariate analysis (contingency tables) and a binary logistic regression to answer the question about which population groups are more likely to use the Internet for political participation. This research question was specified with two hypotheses about *age* and *education*: (1) younger respondents are more likely to use the Internet forms of participation; and (2) highly educated respondents are more likely to use Internet forms of participation. Apart from these two demographic predictors, we included two additional demographic variables in the regression model: *gender* and *location of residence*. Based on the positive association revealed between general and Web-specific forms of political participation, *general forms of political participation* are also included in the model as predictors of Internet participation. Namely, we proceed from the assumption that following the introduction of the Internet citizens who had already been politically active are more likely to use Internet forms of participation than those who were not previously politically active. Thus, the following 12 predictors of Internet political participation are included in the logistic regression model: eight binary variables for general forms of political participation, gender (binary for women), age (three age categories), education level (four categories) and type of place of residence (three categories) (see Table 4).

Table 4: PREDICTORS OF DIGITAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION – RESULTS OF THE BINARY LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS

	B	S.E.	p	Exp(B)
General forms of participation:				
Petition	0.691	0.245	0.005	1.996
Boycott	1.071	0.228	0.000	2.917
Demonstration	0.133	0.316	0.674	1.142
Political meeting	0.112	0.447	0.801	1.119
Contacting a politician	1.132	0.408	0.005	3.101
Donating money	0.128	0.276	0.644	1.136
Contacting the media	0.565	0.569	0.320	1.760
Voting at last national elections	0.128	0.201	0.524	1.137
Demography:				
Gender (female)	-0.488	0.168	0.004	.614
Age			0.000	
18 to 35	1.995	0.225	0.000	7.355
36 to 55	0.992	0.202	0.000	2.696
above 55 (ref.)	0.000			
Education			0.000	
Up to lower secondary (ref.)	0.000			
Secondary	1.021	0.214	0.000	2.776
Some college	1.187	0.252	0.000	3.277
University	1.309	0.268	0.000	3.701
Location of residence			0.963	
Urban	0.015	0.186	0.934	1.016
Suburban	-0.060	0.264	0.819	0.941
Rural (ref.)	0.000			
Constant	-2.542	0.274	0.000	0.079
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test:	$\chi^2 = 8.232$; df = 8; p = 0.411			
Model Summary:	Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.359$			

Note: Statistically significant predictions are shaded
Source: Own calculations based on SJM 2013 data

The bivariate analysis shows only two non-significant associations: there is no difference regarding Internet participation between voters and non-voters and also no differences between respondents from different locations of residence (see the Appendix). In general, we can see that respondents who are practising any 'general' form of political participation (voting at elections is an exception) more often use Internet forms of participation than those who are not active (we can see a more than double proportion of Internet participation among active respondents) (see the Appendix). The bivariate analysis suggests that *age* is the most important factor of digital political participation. Namely, the youngest group (18 to 35 years) is the most active: 63.7 % of respondents in the youngest group are politically

active through the Internet while, among the oldest (above 55 years), this proportion is less than a quarter of that (14.3%) (see the Appendix). We can also see a big difference between those with a university *education* and those with an education below secondary level – 55.9% vs. 17.2% (see the Appendix). A slightly higher level of digital participation can also be noticed among male respondents – 39.7% vs. 31.7% (see the Appendix).

In the multivariate situation of the binary logistic regression model (where the effect of each independent variable is controlled for the effects of all other independent variables included in the model) there are fewer variables with statistically significant effects than in the bivariate situation – only six out of twelve (Table 4). However, the result confirms the importance of both demographic variables – *age* and *education*: (a) the odds of using Internet forms of participation among the youngest respondents (18 to 35 years) are more than seven times greater than among the oldest respondents (Exp(B) = 7.355); and (b) the odds of using digital forms of political participation among university-educated respondents are almost four times greater than among respondents with an education below secondary level (Exp(B) = 3.701). In the multivariate situation the effect of gender is also retained which is, however, much smaller than the effect of age or education: the odds of using online forms of participation among female respondents are approximately 40 percent lower than among male respondents (Exp(B) = 0.614). When it comes to general forms of political participation as predictors for digital participation, only three (out of eight) prove to have statistically significant effects: *signing a petition*, *boycotting products*, and *contacting politicians* (the odds of using online forms of political participation among respondents who engage in these three forms of classical participation are at least double those for respondents not practising these three forms). It seems that *the more individualised general forms of political participation* are more likely to be accompanied (supported) by online forms of political participation.

Conclusions

The results support all four hypotheses arising from our analytical model: (1) we discovered a fairly large group of citizens who for their political activities do not engage in general forms of political participation, but only digital forms of political participation; (2) we discovered stronger associations between online forms of participation and individualised (or protest) traditional forms of participation than with conventional forms of participation; (3) the results show that online forms of political participation are by far the most present among the youngest citizens; and (4) also among the most educated citizens.

Based on the results, we can confidently support the thesis on the relationship between (communication) technology and political participation we posited in the introduction. It seems that the expansion of Internet use is also causing changes in the field of political participation. Namely, the majority of those who are politically active use both classical and online forms of political participation. Given that there is quite a large group of those who exclusively use the online forms of political participation (almost one-third of active citizens), we may support the thesis that the Internet and modern communication technology in general can be seen as an opportunity to expand the space for political participation. We can conclude from the results that this expansion is occurring mostly by way of the greater involvement of young people in politics. Namely, it is the youngest group of respondents where the use of online forms of political participation is the most widespread.

However, the results also point out that with the emergence of the Internet its forms of political participation may also retain some of the traditional inequality. Those with the lowest education are also distinctively less present in the use of online forms of political participation. The same is true for gender differences: at least these Slovenian data suggest that men use the Internet forms of participation to a greater extent than women do.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anduzia, Eva, Marta Catijoch and Aina Gallego (2009): Political Participation and the Internet. Information, Communication and Society 12 (6): 860–878.

Arterton, Christopher (1987): Teledemocracy: Can Technology Protect Democracy? London: Sage.

Bang, Henrik P. (2004): Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens: Building Political not Social Capital. Retrieved 30 July 2011 (http://hdl.handle.net/1885/42117)

Bang, Henrik P. and Eva Soerensen (2001): "The Everyday Maker: Building Political Rather Than Social Capital." Pp. 148–161 in Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life, edited by Paul Dekker and E. M. Uslaner. London and New York: Routledge.

Barber, Benjamin R. (1984): Strong Democracy. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Barnes, Samuel H. (2006): "The Changing Political Participation of Post-communist Citizens." International Journal of Sociology 36 (2): 76–98.

Best, J. Samuel and Brian S. Krueger (2005): Analysing the representativeness of Internet Political Participation. Political Behaviour, 27 (2): 183–216.

Buchstein, Hubertus (1997): Bytes that Bite: The Internet and Deliberative Democracy. Constellations, 4, 2, 248–263.

Budge, Ian (1996): The New Challenge of Direct Democracy. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Sidney Verba (2001): The Private Roots

of Public Action. Gender, Equality, and Political Participation. Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press.
Dalton, Russell J. (1996): Democracy and its Citizens: Patterns of Political Change. Irvine, CA: Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of California. Retrieved 20 January 2012 (http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9pn25985).
Dalton, Russell J. 2008. 'Citizenship Norms and the Expansion of Political Participation.' Political Studies 56 (1): 76–98.
Dalton, Russell J. and Alix van Sickle (2005): The Resource, Structural and Cultural Bases of Protest. Accessed at http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1066&context=csd, (31. 10. 2005).
Davis, Richard in Diana Owen (1998): New Media and American Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Deželan, Tomaž, Danica Fink-Hafner, Mitja Hafner-Fink in Samo Uhan (2007): Državljanstvo brez meja? Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.
Fuchs, Dieter, Guido Rossi Giovanna and Palle Svensson (1998): Support for the Democratic Systems. In: H. Klingemann and D. Fuchs (eds.), Citizens and the State, 323–353. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Grossman, K. Lawrence (1995): The Electronic Republic: Reshaping Democracy in the Information Age. New Yourk: Viking.
Hafner-Fink, Mitja (2010): Dejavniki volilnega obnašanja Slovencev na volitvah v Evropski parlament 2009. Volilna udeležba in nestanovitnost volilne izbire. In Alenka Krašovec (ed.), Volitve v Evropski parlament 2009: 65–89. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede
Hafner-Fink, Mitja, Brina Malnar, Slavko Kurdija, Samo Uhan and Janez Štebe (2014). Slovenian Public Opinion 2013: National Identity (ISSP 2013), Citizenship II (ISSP 2014) and Mirror of Public Opinion [data file]. Slovenia, Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani = University of Ljubljana, Center za raziskovanje javnega mnenja in množičnih komunikacij = Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre [production], 2013. Slovenia, Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani = University of Ljubljana, Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov = Social Science Data Archives [distribution], 2014,
Hill A. Kevin and John E. Hughes (1998): Cyberpolitics: Citizen Activism in the age of the Internet. Oxford: Rowman and Litlefield.
Kluegel, James R. and David S. Mason (1999): Political Involvement in Transition. Who Participates in Central and Eastern Europe? International Journal of Comparative Sociology XL (1): 41–60.
Krueger, Brian S. (2002): Assessing the Potential of Internet Political Participation in the United States: A Resource Approach. American Politics Research 30(5): 476–498. doi: 10.1177/1532673X02030005002
Li, Yaojun and David Marsh (2008): New Forms of Political Participation: Searching for Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers. B. J. Pol. S. 38, 247–272. doi: 10.1017/S0007123408000136
Newton, Kenneth and José Ramón Montero (2007): Patterns of Political and Social Participation in Europe. In Roger Jowell, Caroline Roberts, Rory Fitzgerald and Gillian Eva (eds.), Measuring Attitudes Cross-Nationally. Lessons from the

European Social Survey, 205–237. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications.

Norris, Pippa and John Curtice (2006): If You Build a Political Web Site, Will They come? The internet and political activism in Britain. International Journal of Electronic Government Research, 2(2): 1–21.

Oblak, Tanja (2003a): Boundaries of interactive public engagement: political institutions and citizens in new political platforms. Journal of Computer-mediated Communication, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 1–21. http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol8/issue3/oblak.html.

Oblak, Tanja (2003b): Izzivi e-demokracije. Ljubljana: FDV.

Oblak Črnič, Tanja (2013): Slovenian Offline: Class and Cultural Aspects of Digital Exclusion. Sociologicky časopis/Czech Sociological Review, 49, 6: 927–949.

Parry, Geraint, George Moyser and Neil Day (1992): Political Participation and Democracy in Britain. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Putnam, Robert D. (1995): Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America. Political Science & Politics 28 (4): 664–683.

Stolle, Dietlind, Marc Hooghe, Michele Micheletti (2005): Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation. International Political Science Review 26 (3): 245–269. doi: 10.1177/0192512105053784

Sunstein, Cass R. (2003): Why Societies Need Dissent. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Toš, Niko and Tina Vovk (eds.) (2014): Mednarodna raziskava 'Razumevanje vloge državljana' (Citizenship II, ISSP 2014). SJM 2013/2: Pregled in primerjava rezultatov. Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede, Center za raziskovanje javnega mnenja in množičnih komunikacij.

van Deth, Jan W. (2009): New Modes of Participation and Norms of Citizenship. Paper prepared for delivery at the Joint Sessions of the European Consortium for Political Research. Lisbon (Portugal), April 14–19 2009. Accessed at https://www.academia.edu/2233375/New_Modes_of_Participation_and_Norms_of_Citizenship (26. 9. 2014).

Wattenberg, Martin P. (1998): Turnout Decline in the U.S. and Other Advanced Industrial Democracies. Accessed at http://www.democ.uci.edu/publications/papersseriespre2001/maarty.html, (31. 12. 2005).

Verba, Sidney, Norman H. Nie and Jae-on Kim (1978): Participation and Political Equality. A seven-nation comparison. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Wilhelm, G. Anthony (2000): Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges to Political Life in Cyberspace. London: Routledge.

Appendix

Predictors of digital political participation – bivariate analysis results

	% of web participation	χ^2 (sig.)	Cramer's V
Signing a petition			
– yes	64.7	61.461 (0.000)	0.247
– no	30.5		
Boycotting products...			
– yes	64.5	68.724 (0.000)	0.261
– no	29.9		
Taking part in demonstrations			
– yes	62.8	28.157 (0.000)	0.167
– no	32.9		
Attending a political meeting			
– yes	58.5	10.155 (0.001)	0.100
– no	34.3		
Contacting a politician			
– yes	63.0	16.315 (0.000)	0.127
– no	33.9		
Donating money			
– yes	51.5	12.490 (0.000)	0.111
– no	33.5		
Contacting the media			
– yes	69.6	12.145 (0.000)	0.110
– no	34.4		
Voted at last national elections			
– yes	35.0	*0.021 (0.885)	0.005
– no	34.5		
Gender			
– male	39.7	6.944 (0.008)	0.083
– female	31.7		
Age			
– 18 to 35 years	63.7	170.702 (0.000)	0.411
– 36 to 55 years	38.8		
– above 55 years	14.3		
Education			
– up to lower secondary	17.2	102.755 (0.000)	0.319
– secondary	42.9		
– some college	47.5		
– university	55.9		
Location of residence			
– urban	36.4	*0.419 (0.811)	0.021
– suburban	34.5		
– rural	34.3		

* associations are not significant