Abstract

Workshop I: Web 2.0 and Citizenship Education in Europe

Web tools' developments, potentials and limits in political engagement and citizenship education

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After twenty years of the regime change in Central and Eastern Europe democracy is worsening in Hungary. The incompetency and bad governance disabled previous governments to offer citizens a frame where they can create their personal and economic wellness. Governments failed to make people understand that living in freedom is also a responsibility: responsibility for ourselves and for our communities. Many reasons of these kinds resulted that in 2010 a new far right party won 16% of the Parliamentary seats and a nationalist-populist party, led by a strongman, could win an overwhelming majority. The new government started to reshape and in many ways destroy Hungarian democracy. Rights of key democratic institutions were limited (Constitution Court, Hungarian National Bank), and new laws, such as a new media law and a new constitution were born to fix long-term control of the current leading political force over public policy. In the last half-year, these radical and harmful political changes resulted in serious concerns of many citizens. They intensified the public discourse, mainly through Web 2.0 tools, which are now available for a great number of people and are not controllable easily by the political elite.

I understand citizenship education as a process where people (especially children and young people) acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that make them able to co-operate in the development of an open, cohesive and democratic society, which is also basis for economic development. Participation is a key notion in citizenship education, which links Web-based communication and its strength to build social networks to political activity and citizenship education.

In this workshop I would raise some questions as starting point for discussion:
 ➢ What are the various web tools people can use to express their views on public questions?
 ➢ How efficient blogs and facebook comments can raise people's attention to public issues?

- In addition to organising flashmob events and even large-scale political demonstrations in a very short period of time are there other potentials to use social media to make people act?
- The main characteristic of social media is that its use is very free and users organise it horizontally. What are the chances to use the same tools to market positive ideas: to reach users from the top or from the side?
- Social media users attention frame is very short, especially of young users. What are the chances to use social media tools for educational purposes that create change in attitudes? How can the attention of young web-users be grabbed to not just to look around but to understand the world around them?

Conferences Workshops