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Digital Forums for Policy Making

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Abstract

Western democracies have been experiencing a creeping but constant fall in participation since the 1990s. The advent of the Internet led to a search for alternatives that utilised the potential of online spaces. The technology to enable spaces for proper public deliberation exists, but it lacks a formal process to enable the collaborative building of consensus. This paper designs a deliberative exercise hosted on a digital forum to facilitate participation, be perceived as democratic, and enable consensus, and evaluates its success in meeting these objectives. Two simulations of the designed exercise were conducted with participants and empirical data was collected through a survey of participants, observation of the simulations, and a feedback questionnaire. The design succeeded in facilitating participation and being perceived as democratic, though its success in enabling consensus was tentative. Participants felt the discussion on the forum was unintuitive and not genuine, and the exercises resulted in low turnout during a final vote. The findings, though not generalisable, suggest exploring designs that deepen deliberation or designs that limit interaction.

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1. <u>Introduction</u>

Since the 1990s, voter turnout has been declining in all western democracies. Falling participation is corroding democratic institutions, traditions, and culture. Since the advent of the internet, 'cyber-optimist' scholars have placed their hope in the worldwide web as a place for alternative institutions and practices to emerge and revamp democratic participation. The online world has taken centre stage in democratic politics through social media, digital journalism, and online communities. Yet online communities lack formal processes for decision-making native to the digital space. This research evaluates an experimental deliberative exercise called the 'Discussion Exercise' hosted on a digital forum designed to facilitate participation, be perceived as democratic, and enable consensus. This paper describes the foundational literature for this study, the design of the Discussion Exercise, the methodology used in data collection and analysis, a description and discussion of the results, and a conclusion with suggestions for future research.

Research Question and Objectives

This study is designed to answer the following question: *To what extent is a policy-making digital forum able to facilitate participation, be perceived as democratic, and enable consensus?* This question encapsulates the research objectives to design a deliberative forum for policy making which facilitates participation, is perceived as democratic, and enables consensus. There exists a knowledge gap on designing digital deliberative exercises and evaluating them empirically. This study fills the gap by designing a digital deliberative exercise based on scholarly findings on the factors that affect participation in politics, digital or otherwise. In addition, it fills the gap in designing empirical research to evaluate such exercises on their intended outcomes.

Significance of the Research

This research investigates an experimental, usable democratic process in a time of falling participation in democratic mechanisms. The danger posed to democratic systems by falling participation is dramatic. Researching alternative processes for democratic participation can inform ventures to increase transparency and engagement at local levels of government, organisations, and formal networks. Deliberative democracy is realistic, and deliberation is essential to democracy. (Curato et al. 2017, p. 29) Processes like the Discussion Exercise have already been used to extend transparency and participation in modern democracies, at all

governmental levels. Audrey Tang has implemented measures to that end as Digital Minister for Taiwan (Your Undivided Attention Podcast, 2020), using platforms such as vTaiwan, in turn using Pol.is, and Join, to extend citizen consultations on policy nationwide. Projects of public deliberation have been piloted in OECD member countries, building to what the organisation calls "the deliberative wave". (OECD, 2023) An example of such a project is run in Spain's capital city of Madrid under the name 'Decide_Madrid' (Madrid Decides), allowing residents to make project proposals, be consulted on policy, open debates, and engage in participatory budgeting . The common purpose of these efforts is to extend transparency and expand deliberative elements in democratic governance structures. Like these projects, the Discussion Exercise is a mechanism for democratic governance, with a deeper emphasis on deliberation. Furthermore, processes like the Discussion Exercise are sorely lacking in online communities. Digital communities without a corporate structure or a non-Internet anchor lack the mechanisms for formal governance. Among an ever-increasing internet of noise, communication is lost among spam, advertisement, and AI-generated content. Reaching consensus takes weeks or months and can lead to fragmentation among a community (De Filippi et al., 2020) Deliberative exercises like the Discussion Exercise can serve as a 'bottom-up' mechanism for policy development among digital networks. (Norris 2001) This study records two simulations of such a mechanism and evaluates it, providing foundations for future research and projects.

Collaboration with Tela Network and Practical Significance

This research has counted on support from Tela Network (https://www.tela.network/), a network of remote consultants using the Tela messaging app (https://www.tela.app/). Tela Network has interests in digital governance and digital consultation. Collaboration with this organisation directed the research design towards deriving conclusions of practical use in the current digital landscape. Furthermore, collaboration enriched the research design through shared expertise on relevant subjects. In addition, Tela Network agreed to offer compensation to all interested participants to incentivise engagement with the study. In exchange, this research will feature on their blog (https://telablog.com/) and podcast (https://www.youtube.com/@TelaNetworkPodcast). Tela Network aims to incorporate a consultative process of their shareholders in the future and so had practical interest in lessons learnt from evaluating the Discussion Exercise. Facilitating participation would improve a process of collective consultation. If it is perceived as democratic, it can manifest legitimacy in the policy directions. If it can enable consensus, decision can be pursued with collective

approval and without risking unnecessary division. Such a process can constitute an advantage over informal governance mechanisms that take longer and risk dividing a community (De Filippi et al., 2020).

2. <u>Literature Review</u>

Scope of Literature Review

Six areas of research literature have been reviewed and have informed this research. First, the decline of political participation and voter turnout in modern democracies and the risk that poses. Second, how the Internet, particularly through Web 2.0 and social media, can offer new avenues for political governance enabling more active citizen involvement. Third, a conceptualisation of digital political participation relevant to a deliberative exercise. Fourth, literature on deliberation as a collective, interactive process essential for democratic self-governance and problem-solving. Fifth, conditions and factors necessary for deliberative democracy. Sixth, factors that affect the success or failure of online political participation.

Democracy and Falling Political Participation

Democracies are designed to aggregate public preferences into binding collective decisions. As a result, more active citizen involvement is expected than in a non-democracy. (Dalton & Klingemann 2009). Elections are the primary participatory mechanism in democracies. They are the primary means of implementing the principle of popular sovereignty, as well as the only form of participation that manifests the principle of equal say in political affairs. High participation is considered a good indicator of successful democratic governance. (Rose, 1980) Furthermore, participation is an indispensable element in the development of new democracies and the long-term sustainability of democratic regimes (López Pintor et al., 2002)

Since the 1990s, western democracies have exhibited a creeping but constant fall in political participation. (Holmes and McNeal, 2018; Derksen et al. 2018) The global average voter turnout has fallen significantly, with the decline most visible in Europe, especially in the post-communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe. (Solijonov 2016) A crisis of political participation, particularly prevalent among youth voters, is a crisis of democratic institutions. (Dempsey 2017; Ubeoi 2023) Low turnout in elections has generated widespread concerns about the lack of democratic legitimacy and the potential policy bias. (Bechtel et al., 2018) The fall in participation, risks the loss of the appeal of elections as legitimate tools of democratic governance. (Solijonov, 2016) Damage has already been done to democratic culture, above all by engendering a downward spiral of disaffection and under-representation. (Birch et al. 2013) In response to this decline in political participation, scholars have viewed participation that

goes beyond voting, including online political participation, as an important avenue for alternative civic and political engagement to emerge (Oser et al. 2014).

Deliberative Theories & Evolution

Deliberation has been discussed in political theory as far back as Aristotle, who considered it the paradigmatic activity of political virtue and necessary for self-government. (Bohman 1996) It is the process of subjects exchanging reasons to develop the cooperation necessary to solve problems and stopping at a particular fact. (Hariman 1998; Aristotle, Nic. Ethics, Bk.3) Deliberation in this research is the collective weighing of reasons with others, by communicating, arguing, debating, and persuading; on a digital forum, with a set endpoint for a resolution. (Estlund & Landemore 2018)

Early deliberative democrats mostly focused on non-instrumental benefits of deliberation (Estlund & Landemore 2018). Deliberative democrats argued that open discussion leads to preference changes that characterise a democratic culture; that public deliberation legitimises policy decisions and has a democratising effect on the public, leaving less atomised and more civic individuals. (Coleman & Blumler 2009, p 15; Schneiderhan & Khan 2008) It is argued that deliberative democracy's most important characteristics are its 'reason-giving requirement' and the inclusionary nature the public exchange of reasons. Reasons are exchanged and debated, and justifications for resolutions are a result of cooperation and can be known to those to whom they are addressed. (Schneiderhan & Khan 2008; Bonham 1996) Cohen (2006) argues that ideal deliberation manifests democratic culture and "shapes the identity and interest of citizens in ways that contribute to the common good". According to Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, deliberation is only applied to developing the means of implementing pre-established ends. In the past few decades, the role of deliberation has evolved to include the development of ends as well as means. (Neves, 2016, pg. 746) This evolution has emerged with growing numbers of deliberative processes across the world, across all levels of government. (OECD, 2020)

The Internet and Democratic Potential

Against the backdrop of increasing disenchantment with politics, the perceived disconnection between citizens and politicians, and the loss of trust in institutions, 'cyber-optimists' have hypothesized improvements to democratic governance using the internet. (Norris, 2001; De Landtsheer 2014; Kneuer and Datts 2020) 'Cyber-optimist' and 'cyber-pessimist' scholars

have disagreed about the potential for the internet to develop into a proper public sphere, where ideas and debate can bypass the traditional channels of mass communication, and escape from control, geography, and time barriers (De Landtsheer 2014; Dahlberg 2005). More recent literature has discussed the usefulness of a 'public sphere' conceptualisation. (Eisenegger & Schäfer, 2023) The nature of information flow on the Internet can be both 'top-down', where a near unlimited flow on information reaches the public, and 'bottom-up', where ideas are exchanged, debates held, and public opinion mobilised (Norris 2001). This study assumes that "proper public spheres" can exist in specific online spaces. The Discussion Exercise is an attempt to construct a process fit for such a space.

Early 21st century Web 2.0 technology led to 'social media platforms' emerging. Their 'user-centric' design allowed some users to become active participants in information generation, instead of information recipients. (Natani, 2021) Natani (2021) optimistically sees the potential for an equivalent shift in political agency, believing that a different implementation of existing online tools can establish better governance systems. This study was inspired by De Filippi et al.'s (2020) observations on the dividing effects of informal processes to coordinate policy directions. Such a process fractured the Ethereum community, which after attack on the digital currency's blockchain took weeks to decide on a response to the vulnerability, eventually splitting into two communities and two blockchains, Ethereum and Ethereum Classic. (De Filippi et al. 2020; Vigna, 2016) It is this study's hypothesis that a formalized use of existing digital tools can enable a process for reaching consensus.

Conceptualising 'E-participation'
Online political participation, or 'e-participation', was defined distinctly from 'e-voting' by Ann Macintosh as the result of "technologically enhanced possibilities". She recognised four dimensions to analyse 'e-participation': (1) who should be engaged by whom, (2) with what technology, (3) for what period of time, and (4) in which stage of the decision making (Kneuer & Datts 2020). She also distinguishes three forms 'e-participation' could take: (1) enabling, support for accessibility and understandability of information by the audience, (2) engaging, consulting with a wider audience and supporting deliberative debate on policy issues, and (3) empowering, active participation and bottom-up ideas to influence the political agenda. (Kneuer & Datts 2020) These match the dimensions conceptualised for policy work by the OECD (2001): information, consultation, and active participation.

Conditions for Deliberative Exercises

Scholars have theorised on the features necessary for deliberative processes to succeed. Hariman (1998) described three fundamental social conditions required. (1) 'Non-tyranny', which requires an institutional framework to protect it from majority tule and power asymmetries, such as a "separation of powers or via legally guaranteed rights". (Zachrisson 2010; Bohman 1996) (2) 'Equality', which in deliberation is the equal chance to speak and engage with the process. And (3) 'publicity', which is required to make a process any more than "minimally democratic". For a contributor, publicity means that their intentions could be made known. For the process, it is that any attempts to influence deliberation, through side agreements for example, are known to everyone. It is the sense that all can expect other contributors to the deliberative process to be answerable. (Bohman 1996) A deliberative process, if it is to be considered democratic, must be public and structured to inhabit these conditions. (Estlund & Landemore 2018)

Denters chapter in the book 'The Future of Local Government in Europe' contains several lessons derived from observations of European local democratic reforms. These observations detailed certain characteristics that participants in those democratic reforms valued. 'Effectiveness' and 'efficiency' were valued highly as desirable qualities of governance tools. However, the high valuation of those qualities by citizens was conditional to them having democratic elements. Room for improvement in governance tools lies in meeting effective and efficient service delivery while including better representation and direct citizen involvement. Furthermore, cross-country comparison detailed how reforms of governance processes. should adapt to national, regional, and local differences, where the public attaches varying weight to different aspects of democratic quality. A noteworthy lesson the author highlighted was that while increasing the number of participatory innovations did not increase perceived legitimacy of governance processes, deliberative innovations did do so. Deliberative innovations are reforms that involve deliberation and emphasise reasoned respectful discourse, for example, an advisory assembly of local residents. In contrast, participatory reforms involve direct involvement of the citizenry in decision-making, such as with referenda or participatory budgeting. (Denters 2017) Chwalisz (2020) outlined principles for good deliberative practice. Those principles relevant to designing the Discussion Exercise are (1) outlining a clear task linked to a defined public problem, (2) transparency before and during the exercise, (3) access to information, (4) space for group deliberation, (5) time, and (6) privacy. (Chwalisz, 2020)

Factors Affecting Political Participation

Vecchione et al. (2014) identified that a necessary precondition in political participants is a belief in their ability to impact the political process, to express their political preferences, to support a movement, and monitor affairs. Without this 'internal political self-efficacy', participants are more likely to feel alienated by a political process and withdraw from political engagement. (Groskurth et al. 2012, p. 1; Vecchione et al, 2014) Previous research suggests that a participant in the Discussion Exercise have experience in political participation. (Oser et al. 2014) A factor conducive to developing 'internal political self-efficacy'. Furthermore, participants need 'external political efficacy', the belief that the political system is amenable to change through individual influence. (Craig & Maggiotto, 1982, cited in Groskurth et al. 2012, p. 1) . Research found that successful participation in online assemblies was derived from transparent results, achieved through a transparent process with traceable results; support given to participants, aided by proper marketing and moderated support; clear objectives, and the use of correct channels to mobilize support. (Pina & Torres, 2016, p. 296) Confusion, the multiplication of choices, and political fragmentation harm rates of participation. Participation requires clarity in the political issues at stake, a belief in the consequences of participation, external efficacy; and perception of fairness in the process. (Solijonov, 2016, p. 40) From research conducted by Rottinghaus & Escher (2020) and Pina & Torres (2016) five categories of factors that dissuaded participant engagement during online consultation exercises were extracted. (1) Distrust, effectiveness doubts, and lack of clarity surrounding goals; (2) aversion to online participation, (3) passive or lacking interest, (4) decreasing motivation over longer periods, and (5) limited political will. (Rottinghaus & Escher, 2020, p. 276; Pina & Torres, 2016) Of these, doubts in the effectiveness of the process was the most important factor. (Rottinghaus & Escher, 2020, p. 283)

Concepts

The research question '*To what extent is a policy-making digital forum able to facilitate participation, be perceived as democratic, and enable consensus?*' introduces concepts needing defining. A policy-making digital forum is a digital platform where users can publicly deliberate on policy proposals. Defining 'political participation' is subject to much debate. All polities expect public involvement of some kind in the political process, and so a definition of political participation is affected by its context. (Dalton & Klingemann 2009). "Activities more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take", although often considered too narrow, is a sufficient

conceptualisation for this study. (Verba & Nie 1972; Conge 1988) This study is interested in participants' perceptions of how democratic the Discussion Exercise is. There are indices that measure democratic quality through multi-variate analyses, such as V-Dem, which include observable and subjective variables, POLDEM, which measures political liberties and popular sovereignty, and Freedom House, which measures political rights and civil liberties (Pemstein et al. 2015; Högström 2013). This study follows the World Values Survey's approach, which asks participants to employ their own standards for democracy (Mauk 2021). 'Consensus' is a general agreement that, contrary to a coincidence of interests, has to be gradually and carefully built and that, contrary to a compromise, stands without reservations. It is "mainly a way to overcome conflicts" through the establishment of "the right conditions for the correct use of reason". (Neves, 2016, p. 745) In this study, 'consensus' is the general agreement on policy, achieved through a majority of support expressed in the Discussion Exercise, and contentment with the result expressed through collected feedback.

3. <u>Methodology</u>

Overall Methodology

Central to the research is a digital deliberation process called the Discussion Exercise. The process was designed with this research in mind. Volunteers participated in two empirical simulations of the Discussion Exercise. This research collected and analysed empirical data to evaluate the Discussion Exercise on the basis of these participant-populated simulations. The data collection methods were an Initial Survey of participants, an Observation Stage of the simulation, and a Feedback Questionnaire.

Design of the Discussion Exercise

The design of the Discussion Exercise had two aims, to develop a prototype for formal process of remote deliberation, and to design a policy-making digital forum to empirically answer the research question: *To what extent is a policy-making digital forum able to facilitate participation, be perceived as democratic, and enable consensus?* The Discussion Exercise, and the recruitment and support materials that accompanied it, were developed to facilitate participation, be perceived as democratic, and enable consensus. The literature on deliberation, 'e-participation', and factors affecting participation informed the design of the Discussion Exercise. The exercise would have a set endpoint. It would include discussion on ends framed by a clear task linked to a defined public problem accordingly to Chwalisz's (2020) outlines for good deliberative practice. Accordingly, the exercise would prioritize transparency, access to information, space of deliberation, time, and privacy. (Chwalisz, 2020) Observing Denters' (2017) advice, the Discussion Exercise's design was balanced between democratic elements and a pursuit for efficiency and effectiveness as a tool for policy making. Furthermore, a discussion-based deliberative design was pursued, rather than a participatory one, in seeking to enable a consensus to form among participants. (Denters, 2017) The design would answer Macintosh's four dimensions of analysis: who, technology, time, and stage of decision making. By her categorisation, the Discussion Exercise was 'engaging e-participation', a process of consultation and deliberative debate on policy issues. (Kneuer & Datts, 2020) The study provided moderated support to participants, used marketing to promote the exercise effectively and recruit participants, communicated the political issues at stake and Discussion Exercise's objectives with clarity, and constructed a transparent process with traceable results in accordance with Pina & Torres'(2016), Rottinghaus & Escher's (2020), and Solijonov's (2016) findings. The recruitment and support materials were developed to be this support,

communicating the study and Discussion Exercise's objectives and proceedings, participant tasks, subject matter, and encouraging deliberation.

The Discussion Exercise would be hosted on an existing digital platform that allows 24/7 access to a digital forum. The chosen platform was Reddit (reddit.com), where private forums could be hosted with free-to-create accounts. A digital forum permitted the simulation of the Discussion Exercise, which simulated a stage of decision-making were an authoritative body has defined a problem to be solved and wants to consult its membership for solutions. Participants' task in the exercise was framed by defined topic of discussion: a "Challenge'. Challenges were complicated issues formulated as a question. To simulate the task of a deliberate exercise, participants were asked to draft and discuss 'Policy Proposals'. These proposals were to be policy solutions to the 'Challenge'. Each of the Discussion Exercise simulations had its own Challenge. Framing each Discussion Exercise with a 'Challenge' follows Chwalisz's (2020) advice to clearly outline a task with a defined public problem. The Discussion Exercise would have a set endpoint: A final poll hosted to determine the end of the exercise and the resolution of the deliberations. Participants had transparent access to the study's proceedings and the dated procedure of the Discussion Exercise via recruitment materials, 24/7 access to the forum, and support materials. The period of time set aside for the Discussion Exercise was eight days. Seven days (MON-SUN) would allow participants to find time to engage to some extent in a 'Proposal Stage', where the task was to propose and discuss policy solutions to the 'Challenge'. The last twenty-four hours were the 'Voting Stage'. Participants were asked to vote on their preferred "Policy Proposal" from amongst the three most popular ones posted on their forum. Popularity was discerned by 'Upvotes', a marker on the forum of approval, equivalent to 'Likes' on social media platforms. Participant privacy on the forum would be guaranteed though the use of pseudonyms. Each simulation was designing to include around twenty participants. Twenty was deemed a recruitable number of participants and a sufficient cohort to allow for discussion, accounting for dropouts and social reticence.
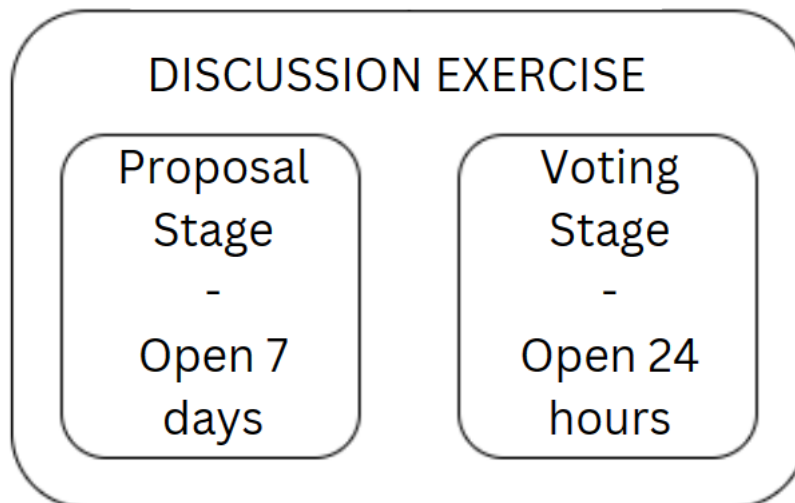
Figure 1 - Stages of the Discussion Exercise

Participant Groups and the 'Challenges'

Two iterations of the Discussion Exercise were run simultaneously with two groups of participants. Each group was given its own unique 'Challenge'. The task for participants is to discuss and propose policy solutions linked to a defined 'Challenge'. The process of choosing what problems to pose to participants assumed that participants would be more likely to engage with a problem that they were aware of, that related to a topic of interest, and that did not have a consensus solution. These assumptions derived from the findings in the literature of the need for clarity surrounding objectives and the political issues at stake, and for personal interest in the topic and proceedings. (Rottinghaus & Escher, 2020; Pina & Torres, 2016; Solijonov, 2016) The two topics chosen for the 'Challenges' were related to the subject matter of the study. The assumption was that participants likely to sign on to this study were likely interested in the study's subject matter. The two general subject areas of the study are democratic participation and digital governance. Therefore, a public problem relevant to each topic was identified. These were, (a) the low voter turnout in democracies among young people, and (b) the regulation of speech on digital platforms. These topics were formulated as questions. Participants chose their preferred 'Challenge' and were placed in a group with participants who had chosen the same topic. Each group was designated a forum in which to simulate the Discussion Exercise. Group A had 20 participants engaging with the 'Challenge': *How should the democracies tackle low voter turnout among young people?*. Group B had 17 participants engaging with this 'Challenge': *How should digital networks regulate their users' speech?*

Preparing the Fora on Reddit.com (See Appendix IV for Copies)

To host the two iterations of the Discussion Exercise, two private Reddit communities were created by the researcher. Each private community was given a simple name (e.g., Forum_Discussion_[letter]), had the 'Challenge' fixed at the top, and was given a simple icon and banner image (See Appendix IV for screenshots). The icons were stylised icon of the groups letter, generated using Copilot Designer (www.bing.com/images/create). The banner image, an image that sits above the forum and stretches left to right to a display monitor's edges, was a section of a blue sky with a few faint streaks of cloud. It was assumed that simple stylisation could promote calm deliberation that the fora were intended to host. Furthermore, stylisation of the forum was done to give participants the impression of moderation and professionalism, shown to be conducive to participation (Pina & Torres, 2016). Leaving the fora in the default tones of grey may have given participants familiar with the platform an impression that the study was underprepared. This might have produced doubts in participants about the effectiveness of the process, which Rottinghaus & Escher (2020) found to be the most important factor in dissuading participation in online consultation. To populate the fora, the researcher created 37 new Reddit accounts. Each participant was assigned one of those Reddit accounts. Each account was made using a temporary email address (https://www.emailondeck.com/), a username (Name_Surname) created from a name generator (https://randomwordgenerator.com/), and a generated password (https://passwordsgenerator.net/). This was done for privacy and security.

Recruitment Strategy

The sampling strategy was purposive, the goal was to find a cohort of participants that would engage with the Discussion Exercise and its data collection methods. The recruitment strategy was an intrinsic part of the process of constructing a digital forum for policy making that facilitates participation, is perceived as democratic, and enables consensus. Previous successes in participation for online assemblies had been aided by proper marketing. (Pina & Torres, p.296) Furthermore, recruitment materials could serve as guides for participants during the study, part of the support given to participants that Pina & Torres (2016) found aided participation. This study promoted itself in such a way as to promote the factors that had been tied to successful participation. The literature on factors that affected participation emphasized the importance of clear goals, transparency in the process, personal interest, access to information, and active moderation. (Pina & Torres, 2016; Solijonov, 2016) The campaign allowed the researcher to communicate the goals of the study and the Discussion Exercise. Materials were developed to foment transparency and access to information, listing what

participants' tasks were, how to do them, when and where, and why. Furthermore, by communicating the subject and importance of the study as well as 'Challenges', the recruitment campaign purposively sought participants that had personal interest in the subjects under study or being discussed. Upfront communication of the 'Challenges' also gave participants time to consider their 'Challenge' before the start of deliberation. Pina & Torres (2016) also found that moderated support was conducive to participation, so the recruitment campaign and materials took care to promote the researcher as someone answerable to complaints, inquiries, and requests for help. Effectively communicating the Discussion Exercise's deliberative features reflected Denters (2017) findings that deliberative innovations perceptions of democratic legitimacy. Detailing the Discussion Exercise's procedure was how it used deliberation to decide on policy was an attempt to communicate the study's 'external political efficacy' and alleviate doubts in the effectiveness of the process. 'External political efficacy' is the belief that a process is amenable to individual influence, necessary for high participation. (Craig & Maggiotto, 1982, cited in Groskurth et al. 2012, p. 1) Furthermore, doubts in a process' effectiveness was found to be the most important factor in dissuading online participation. (Rottinghaus & Escher, 2020, p. 283)

*Recruitment Materials: The Information Page (*See Appendix II for Copies)

An array of materials were developed as part of the recruitment strategy. Following Pina & Torres' (2016) findings, a diverse range of channels were used to mobilize participation. A participation information webpage was published at: https://digital-forums-for-policy-discussion.my.canva.site/participant-information-page. The webpage outlined the study and the Discussion Exercise for would-be participants and was designed as reference point for participants during the study. The webpage included three items designed to clarify participants' tasks and serve as guides for engaging with the Discussion Exercise: A five-item list of tasks, a five-step walkthrough, and a brief outline of what a policy proposal could look like. They were designed to clarify participants' tasks in pursuit of facilitating participation in the Discussion Exercise and to encourage deliberation, which is linked to the perceived legitimacy of democratic tools (Denters, 2017).

   Five 'Tasks'

The webpage listed, with a visual guide, five 'tasks' participants were encouraged to do during the Discussion Exercise: (1) Post proposals, (2) Comment on proposals, (3) Upvote proposals, (4) Reply to comments, (5) Edit proposals. These 'tasks' were objective actions that would

represent engagement with other participants' ideas. Participants posting proposals, engaging with others' proposals, and responding to inquiries on their own proposals and editing their proposal to reflect others' criticism would be deliberation. This guide was to encourage such engagement and to guide unfamiliar users with mechanics of the digital platforms interface.
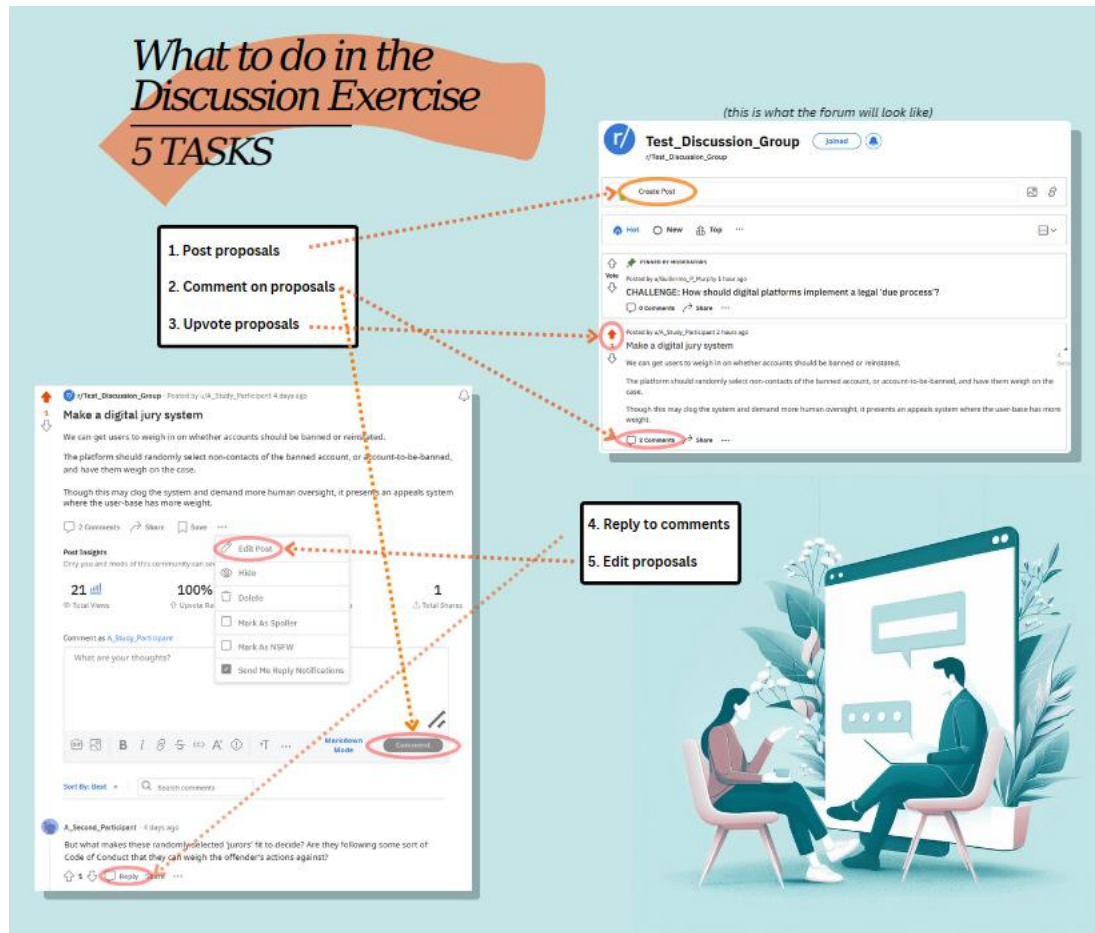

Figure 2 - Five 'Tasks' of the Discussion Exercise (Source: Information Page)

Five Steps

The five-step walkthrough of what participation in the Discussion Exercise should look like listed: (1) Read proposals, (2) Upvote! (3) Write and post your own policy proposal, (4) Discuss!, and (5) Edit your proposal. This example was there to further clarify participants' tasks, guiding engagement towards deliberation.
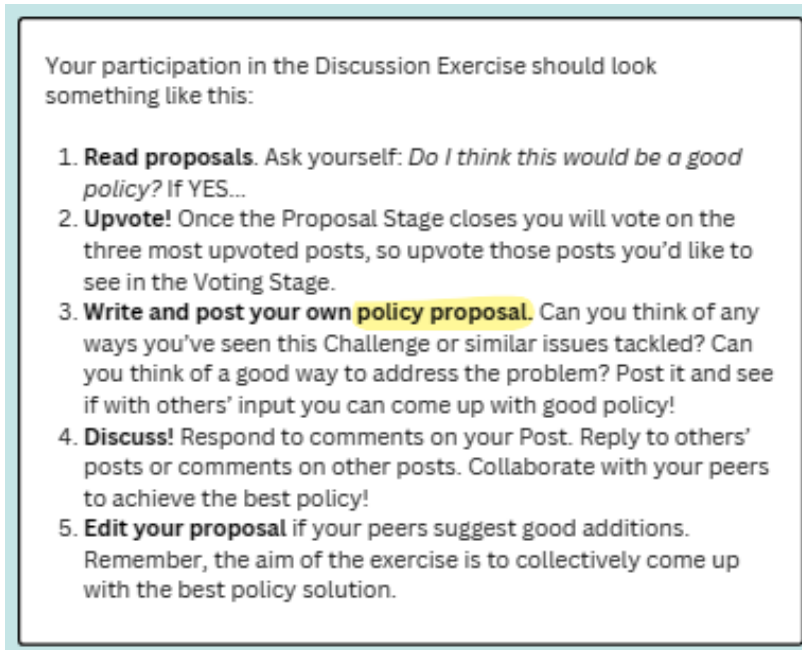
Figure 3 - Five Step Walkthrough (Source: Information Page)

Policy Proposal Outline

The webpage included an outline of what three questions a 'policy proposal' in the Discussion Exercise should answer: What, How, and Why. Like the two other guides, this was to clarify what participants were expected to do and provide a pattern that could be easily followed while engaging in deliberation.
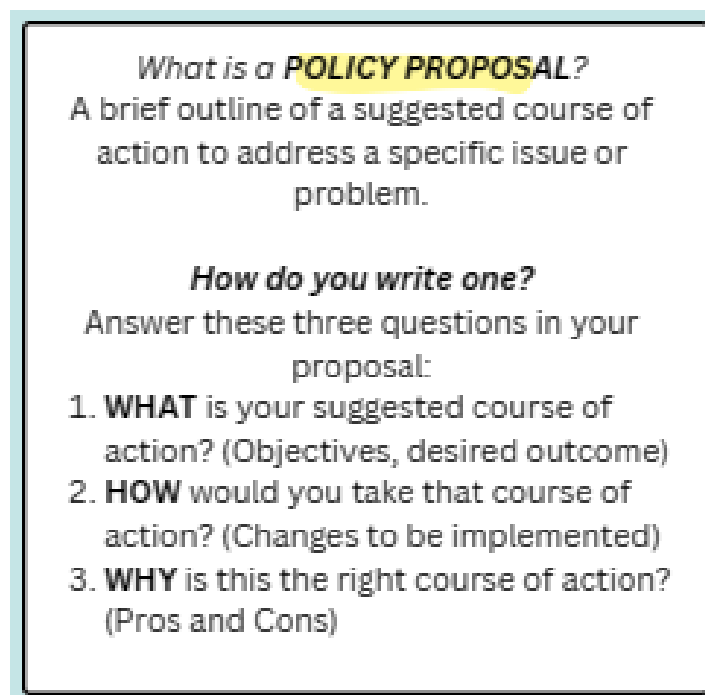

Figure 4 - Policy Proposal Outline (Source: Information Page)

The webpage also included details of the three 'Challenges' participants were offered to choose from, with a longer summary of the problem and links to some articles with context on the issue. The webpage was linked to from other recruitment materials.

Recruitment Materials: Other (See Appendix II for Copies)

A four-page flyer and infographic that were publicly displayed were developed to physically advertise the study. Both included a QR code that linked to the webpage and another QR code that linked to the first step of data collection. An article was written on telablog.com, Tela Network's blog, and shared through social media platforms and the researcher's university's 'All Company' channel on Viva Engage, used by many students. Materials were also used when reaching out to individuals and student societies. Tela Network, the collaborating organization, agreed to offer shares in its enterprise as compensation for participating in this research. Participants were offered fifteen shares in Tela Network if they participated in the Discussion Exercise and completed the Feedback Questionnaire. The recruitment materials advertised this compensation for participation. Of the thirty-seven signees to the Initial Survey, twenty-one opted-in for compensation. Of the twenty-one, fifteen completed the Feedback Questionnaire and as a result were issued shares as compensation by Tela Network.

Support Materials (See Appendix III for Copies)

Participants in the Discussion Exercise were sent a series of email as part of their participation. The purpose of these emails was to remind participants of their tasks, to give them an avenue of direct communication with the researcher, and to describe the how study was progressing. The aim of these emails was to encourage participation throughout the Discussion Exercise. As mentioned previously, Pina & Torres (2016) found that moderated support aided participation. Email updates were a means to provide that support. The support was to provide clarity in participants' tasks, and transparency in the Discussion Exercise and study's proceedings.

In total, participants were sent six emails. The first email was sent seven days before the start of the Discussion Exercise and included details of when the exercise would begin, when they would receive a second email and what it would contain, and some information already found on the Information Page. The second email was scheduled for and sent out at 00:00 on the date of the start of the 'Discussion Exercise'. It contained each participant's account details, a link

to the Reddit communities, a visual guide to signing in, and a reminder of their task. The third email was sent on the third day of the Discussion Exercise reminding participants to log in and participate with a re-designed version of the visual in Figure 2. The fourth email was sent out on the last day of the Proposal Stage of the Discussion Exercise. It urged participants to use the remaining 24 hours to upvote their preferred proposals and included a visual guide to doing that. A fifth email was sent at the start of the Voting Stage informing participants that the final poll had been fixed to the top of their Reddit community. The sixth email was sent at the close of the final poll at 23:59 of the 8th day, with the result of the vote and a link to the Feedback Questionnaire. These emails were part of the support strategy which, like the recruitment strategy, was implemented as part of the Discussion Exercise to reflect the findings in the literature that moderated support facilitated participation in online political assemblies. (Pina & Torres, 2016; Solijonov, 2016; Rottinghaus & Escher, 2020)

Study Procedure & Methods of Data Collection (See Appendix I for Copies)

The study collected data in three stages. First, an 'Initial Survey' of participants collecting background data on participants to describe the sample population's characteristics. Second, an 'Observation Stage' of the Discussion Exercise simulations, where data describes the forms participation took place. Thirdly, a 'Feedback Questionnaire' to collect feedback on the participants' experiences of the Discussion Exercise. Recruitment of participants began in December of 2023, through the various means described earlier. By completing the Initial Survey, a participant signed on to the Discussion Exercise. The simulations of the Discussion Exercise were set to start on 29/01/2024, the last Monday of January. The Initial Survey was closed that same day. It was assumed that a large part of the sample population were going to be students, as distribution of physical recruitment material occurred mainly on the researcher's university campus. The date was chosen as it represented a period with few assessments for students, therefore facilitating participation for students. The Feedback questionnaire was opened on the 06/02/2024 and closed on the 26/02/2024, giving participants just under three weeks to give their feedback. The Initial Survey and Feedback Questionnaire were both hosted on Qualtrics, and all data from them and observation of the Discussion Exercise was stored on OneDrive for Business. Participant privacy was ensured using pseudonymous accounts on the Reddit community and by never sharing any details of those participating. Consent was given in the Initial Survey. Participants were informed of their right to retract that consent at any time.
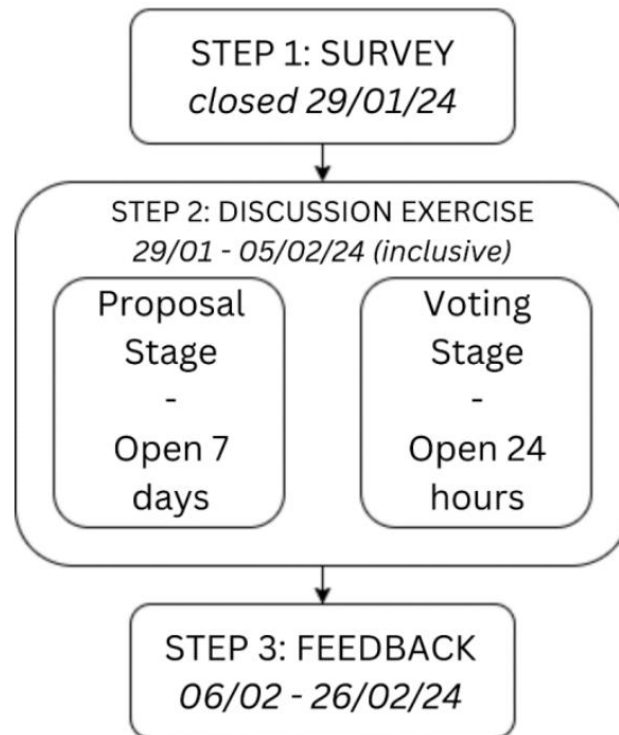
Figure 5 - Dated Study Procedure

Initial Survey

The aims of the Initial Survey were to collect socio-demographic data, the participants' professional and academic backgrounds, their experience with digital tools, and their past experiences of political participation. The Survey also served to get informed consent from the participants and for participants indicate willingness to accept compensation in the form of shares. The background data would be analysed to describe representability of the sample. The sample's characteristics would also serve to evaluate findings derived from the Feedback Questionnaire on the Discussion Exercise's capacity to facilitate participation, be perceived as democratic, and enable consensus.

Observation Stage

The aims of the Observation Stage were to collect quantitative data on the forms participation took during the Discussion Exercise through observation. Fundamentally, this data provides a description of participation. It answers the question of whether any participation occurred and what participation occurs. Analysing this data described the nature of participation during the Discussion Exercise. It was used to infer a relationship between participants' feedback and what occurred in the Discussion Exercise.

Feedback Questionnaire

The aims of the Feedback Questionnaire were to collect data on participants' experience and feelings towards the Discussion Exercise. Data was collected with a mixed-methods approach, Likert-Type questions and optional text entries. A Likert Scale of 1-5 was used for respondents to record the extent to which they agreed with a statement describing their experience. There were five sections: Ease-of-Use, Consensus, Participation and Satisfaction, Format, and Perceived Democratic Quality. The Ease-of-Use section recorded experiences on the ease of participation in the study and Discussion Exercise. It was informed by findings that ease of participation was improved through a combination of a transparent process and traceable results, support given to participants, effective marketing, clear objectives, and mobilization through correct channels. (Pina & Torres, 2016) The Consensus section recorded experiences of agreement, finding common ground, resolution of conflicts, reflexion, and the final vote. It was informed by the Denters' (2017) findings that deliberative innovations increased the legitimacy participants in democratic reforms viewed the governance tools. This sections data is also used to evaluate this study's assumption, informed by De Filippi et al.'s (2020) observations on division in informal digital governance, that formalized use of existing digital tools could enable the reaching of consensus. The Participation and Satisfaction section recorded participants' impressions of their own participation and others' interactions, as well as with their experience with the study and researcher. Data from this section served to infer a relationship between satisfaction and feelings of consensus and democratic quality. This section also served as place for participants to indicate dissatisfaction with the study or the researcher. The Format section records experiences relating to the format of the Discussion Exercise, its perceived fairness, its tools, the Challenge, and its length. Parts of this section inform analysis of the sections of democratic quality, while others serve as indicators of avenues of future research. The Perceived Democratic Quality section collects responses on participants' perceptions of the Discussion Exercise on values such as equal opportunity to communicate, a balanced discussion, and representability, as well as a more general notion of whether they felt the exercise was democratic. This section follows the approach to surveying democratic quality modelled by the World Values Survey, which asks respondents to employ their own standards in rating quality of democracy (Mauk 2021). Respondents are asked about equal opportunities to have a say, balanced discussion, and how the outcome represents them.

The Feedback Questionnaire's Likert-Type questions were formulated as statements participants could express agreement to on a scale from 1 to 5. Furthermore, most statements

were formulated to be 'positive'. A positive statement agreed to by a participant would indicate that the participant's feedback positively correlates with one of the intended outcomes of the Discussion Exercise. For example, if a participant responds to the statement: "You felt that the discussion on the forum led to common ground" (Q12), with 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree', then that would indicate a positive correlation between that participant's feedback and the design of the Discussion Exercise to have a consensus be reached. Responses to each positive statement are given a value ranging from 1 to 5. 'Strongly Agree' scores 5 and 'Strongly Disagree' scores 1. Consequently, a higher score in a Section of the Feedback Questionnaire suggests a strong correlation between responses in that section to the intended outcomes of the design of the Discussion Exercise, which was designed to help answer the research question.

There are a three exceptions to this 'positive' formulation. Q13 in 'Section 2: Consensus' is formulated as a 'negative' statement, the reverse of a positive statement. Responses to Q13, 'You felt that the discussion on the forum led to disagreement', of 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' negatively correlate with an intended outcome of the Discussion Exercise's design, in this case the ability for the forum to enable consensus. The inclusion of a negative statement serves a similar function as an attention check, which serves to identify if the data has been spoiled by inattentive respondents. (Oppenheimer et al., 2009, cited in Gummer et al., 2021, pg. 241) A negative statement here allows us to check if the responses to it match what can be expected from the pattern of responses derived from the other questions. Q13 immediately follows Q12 (shown above) and is formulated identically except for the interchange of "common ground" for "disagreement". If the response pattern of Q12 is reflected in Q13 by having a roughly equal response in the reverse direction, then the analysis of the feedback responses can assume that the data is relatively unspoiled. A 'roughly equal' response in the reverse direction is considered one that allows for some derivation due to the change of wording but must reflect the response pattern of Q12. Describing any change in the expected response pattern allows the analysis to correct for statistical noise and improve the trustworthiness of conclusions. (DeSimone et al., 2018, pg. 559)

The other two non-'positive' statements are both in 'Section 4: Format' of the Feedback Questionnaire. Q31 and Q32 are not positive statements, but questions aimed at informing future research.. One states a preference for a shorter length of time given for a Proposal Stage, the other a preference for longer. Neither of these statements suggest a positive

correlation with the intended outcomes of the Discussion Exercise's design, so participant responses to these questions do not count towards Section 4's score.

Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were derived from background data collected in the Initial Survey, using it to weigh the analyses of the Discussion Exercise observation and from the Feedback Questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the data collected through observation of the Discussion Exercise. Data from the Feedback Questionnaire was analysed through a mixed approach. To analyse the Feedback Questionnaire, the Likert-Scale response were given a score, tabled, and visualized in a column chart to facilitate comparison. Likert Scale data is usually treated as interval, but strictly speaking it is ordinal. (Wu & Leung, 2017) An interval scale assumes that the difference between each response option is equal. Treating this data, with just five Likert Scale points, as interval will not yield correlations as trustworthy as data derived from questions with more Likert Scale points. (Wu & Leung, 2017, pg. 531) As a result, as well as calculating the mean, the mode is calculated as a measure of central tendency. Using the mode as a measure of central tendency does not assume that the data is interval, and the two measures can be compared for a more complete illustration of the centre of data distribution.. Displaying the mode is a reminder that Likert-type responses cannot quantify the distance between to responses, e.g., the distance between 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree', and so only serve as an illustration of the response tendency, not the extent of agreement. Calculating a comparable score as well as the mode facilitates summarisation, comparison between sections of questionnaire, and analysis in regards to the research question. This method informed the central tendency of the responses in the five sections of the Feedback Questionnaire. Finally, Braun & Clarke' (2022) guide for reflexive thematic analysis was used to interpret the optional text entries of the Questionnaire.

Thematic analysis is a method for developing, analysing, and interpreting patterns across a dataset that relate to a research question. It involves data coding, to capture the essence of the data, and generating themes, to identify broader patterns of meaning. (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pg. 39) The text entries left by respondents to the Feedback Questionnaire are analysed to discover conceptual patterns among responses that might inform enrich answers to the research question and invite future research. The process behind involves familiarisation with the qualitative data, coding, initial theme generation, theme review and development; theme refining, defining, and naming; and writing. (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pg. 41) The coding is

done to demarcated differences and notice shared or similar meaning between written entries. Braun & Clarke, 2022, pg. 90) Themes conceptualise a wide range of data into a shared idea. They summarize data around shared meaning. (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pg. 112)

4. <u>Results</u>

Characteristics of Sample Population

The sampling for this research was purposive to enabling the Discussion Exercise. Knowing the sample's characteristics enables an evaluation of whether the digital forum facilitated participation, was perceived as democratic, and enabled consensus. Oser et al.'s (2014) findings on digital political participation suggest that a participant in the Discussion Exercise will be experienced in political participation, offline or online. (Oser et al. 2014) This expectation is reinforced by Anduiza & Tormos' (2022) finding that deliberative experiments such as the Discussion Exercise serve as "channels of expression for dissatisfied citizens […] who opt to participate [in politics] in their own way", suggesting that participants in the Discussion Exercise will have experiences in political participation.

Of the thirty-seven participants, twenty-one (56.76%) identified as male, fourteen (37.84%) as female, one as non-binary/third gender, and another preferred not to say. Twenty-one (56.76%) were under age 25, ten (27%) were between age 25 and 40, and six (16.2%) were over 40 years old. Twenty (47%) participants were students, eight (19%) were employed in part-time, six (14%) were employed full-time, another six (14%) were self-employed, two (5%) selected 'other' to specify being 'in-between jobs' and 'giving tutoring classes', and one (2%) respondent was unemployed – note that some respondents selected multiple options. When asked what the highest level of education they had completed was, thirteen (35%) stated they had completed some university but had no attained a degree, ten (27%) had completed a graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, Law Degree, Medical Degree, etc.), eight (22%) had completed a bachelor's degree, five (14%) stated secondary education, and one (3%) stated vocational or similar education.

The participants in employment worked in a wide range of industries. Only four (18%) were in the technology, software, or digital sector. Of those who were currently in higher education, the biggest single group were those studying a subject in social and political sciences, 12 participants (32.4%).Of the thirty-seven participants, over 80% used email (thirty-two), browsed the internet (thirty-five), social media (thirty-one) frequently or daily and over two-thirds (twenty-five) used online collaboration tools frequently or daily. The most variation in frequency of use was in browsing or participating in online forums, were with eleven having never done so, nine having done so rarely, and eight occasionally - 75%

of participants had limited practical experience of digital forums. Participants were asked to indicate what forms of political participation they had engaged in previously. Thirty-one (84%) had voted in an election for public office, thirty (81%) had signed a petition, twenty-one (57%) had taken part in a public demonstration, nineteen (51%) had boycotted products, sixteen (43%) had contacted a politician, fourteen (38%) had attended a political forum, thirteen (35%) had been a member of an interest-based group, ten (27%) had financially contributed to political campaigns or causes, eight (22%) had participated in letter-writing campaigns, seven (19%) had served on local boards or commissions, five (14%) had displayed a badge, three (8%) had worked in a party, and two (4%) had worked in a government.

Summarily, the majority of participants were under the age of 25 (56.76%), only one participant was unemployed (2%), and a significant majority had an education above secondary (87%). Participants had a wide range of professional and educational backgrounds. Of those in education, the largest group were those reading a social science (32.4%). Participants had frequent practice using digital tools, although three-quarters of them had limited experience using digital forums. Participants had a significant and ranging experience in political participation. Over half had experience voting, signing petitions, publicly demonstrating, and boycotting products. Notably, a little over a third of participants (38%) had attended a political forum before.

40.14% of the world population is under the age of 25, compared to 56.76% of participants. (OurWorldInData, 2022) 2.71% of the world population is actively enrolled in tertiary education, compared to 47% of participants. (World Bank, 2022) 41.8% of the world population has attained enrolment in tertiary education, compared to 87% of participants. (World Bank, 2022) 57.7% of the world population is in employment, compared with 51% of participants. (ILOEST, 2023) One participant (2%) was unemployed, whereas the world unemployment rate is 5.1%. (World Bank, 2023) 32.4% of the students in the sample were enrolled in a social & political sciences subject, as opposed to 9.35% of all tertiary students in the EU27 (Eurostat, 2021).

Table 1 - Representability of Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	In Sample Population (%)	In World Population (%)
Male	56.8	50.3
Under Age 25	56.8	40.1
In Employment	51	57.7
In Education	47	2.71
Unemployed	2	5.1
With Education Above Secondary	87	41.8
Students in Social & Political Sciences	32.4	9.4*

*EU27 Population Data

Note: Values rounded to nearest decimal

Source: Data Collection; OurWorldInData; World Bank; ILOSTAT; Eurostat

Observations

Data collected by observation of the two iterations of the Discussion Exercise is shown here in two groupings, one for each group of participants.

Table 2 - Observation Data

Category	Variable	Group A (17 participants)	Group B (20 participants)
Forms of Participation	*Total No. of Upvotes*	31	38
	No. of Upvotes on Proposals	21	22
	No. of Upvotes on Comments	10	16
	No. of Users that Posted Proposals	8	7
	No. of Users that Commented	8	5
	No. of Users that Posted Proposals and/or Commented	11	10
	No. of Proposals	9	7
	No. of Proposals With Comments	6	5
	No. of Edited Proposals	0	0
	No. of Comments	17	11
	No. of Replies to Comments	4	1
	No. of Votes in the Final Poll	5	4
Descriptive Statistics			
Word Count of Proposals	*Minimum*	128	70
(rtn)	*$1^{st}/3^{rd}$ Quartile*	168/486.5	110/178
	Median	265	153
	Mean	329	141

	Maximum	686	181
	Total	2956	985
Word count of Comments and Comment Replies	*Minimum*	23	11
(rtn)	*1st/3rd Quartile*	46/100	67/101
	Median	71.5	80
	Mean	81	90
	Maximum	223	203
	Total	1131	985

rtn: Rounded to nearest whole number

Source: Observation

Both groups had similar observed participation in their respective Discussion Exercise. Both groups upvoted proposals and comments, reaching 31 and 38 upvotes in Groups A and B respectively, and most on proposals. Most proposals in both groups were commented on. Both groups saw zero proposals edited after they were first posted. This is notable as it was one of the five steps that participants were suggested to take in the recruitment and support materials. Both groups also saw low turnout in the Final Poll of the Discussion Exercise, 5 (29%) in Group A and 4 (20%) in Group B. Of the two, Group A saw more involved forms of participation, more proposals, comments, and replies. Group B saw more lighter-touch participation, more upvotes. In Group A, 11 of the 17 (65%) participants posted proposals or commented. In Group B, 10 of the 20 (50%) participants did. Group A wrote three times the amount of total words in their proposals that Group B did. The statistics relating to the word count of comments and comment replies is more comparable, though Group A has the greater figure.

Results of the Feedback Questionnaire

Feedback Questionnaire Section 1: Ease of Use (24 responses)

Table 3 - Likert-Type Response Frequencies and Score by Section

Likert 1-5 Response*	Frequency (6 questions)	Score*
Strongly Agree	61 (42.4%)	305
Agree	69 (47.9%)	276
Neutral	12 (8.3%)	36
Disagree	1 (.7%)	2
Strongly Disagree	1 (.7%)	1
Total	144 (100%)	**620**

Feedback Questionnaire Section 2: Consensus (24 responses)

Likert 1-5 Response*	Frequency (5 questions)	Score*
Strongly Agree	16 (13.3%)	80
Agree	53 (44.2%)	212
Neutral	41 (34.2%)	123
Disagree	9 (7.5%)	18
Strongly Disagree	1 (0.8%)	1
Total	120 (100%)	**434**

Feedback Questionnaire Section 3: Participation and Satisfaction (24 responses)

Likert 1-5 Response*	Frequency (5 questions)	Score*
Strongly Agree	42 (35%)	210
Agree	51 (42.5%)	204
Neutral	19 (15.8%)	57
Disagree	6 (5%)	12
Strongly Disagree	2 (1.7%)	2
Total	120 (100%)	**485**

Feedback Questionnaire Section 4: Format (23 responses)

Likert 1-5 Response*	Frequency (7 questions)	Score*
Strongly Agree	67 (41.6%)	335
Agree	83 (51.6%)	332
Neutral	4 (2.5%)	12
Disagree	7 (4.3%)	14
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	161 (100%)	**693**

Feedback Questionnaire Section 5: Perceived Democratic Quality (23 responses)

Likert 1-5 Response*	Frequency (4 questions)	Score*
Strongly Agree	35 (38%)	175
Agree	37 (40.2%)	148
Neutral	15 (16.3%)	45
Disagree	5 (5.4%)	10
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	92 (100%)	**378**

* Strongly Agree = 5, Agree, = 4 Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

Note: Percentages rounded to one decimal place

Source: Feedback Questionnaire (Appendix I)

Having calculated the scores for each section, descriptive statistics inform the central tendency for each section of the Feedback Questionnaire, as well as the whole questionnaire. Central tendency is a statistical measure that identifies the single value that best represents the centre of a data distribution.

Table 4 - Descriptive Statistics for the Feedback Questionnaire

	Section 1: Ease of Use	Section 2: Consensus	Section 3: Participation and Satisfaction	Section 4: Format	Section 5: Perceived Democratic Quality	All Sections
Mode	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Mean	4.3	3.6	4	4.3	4.1	4.1

Note: Values rounded to one decimal place

Source: Feedback Questionnaire

Table 5 - Feedback Questionnaire Means
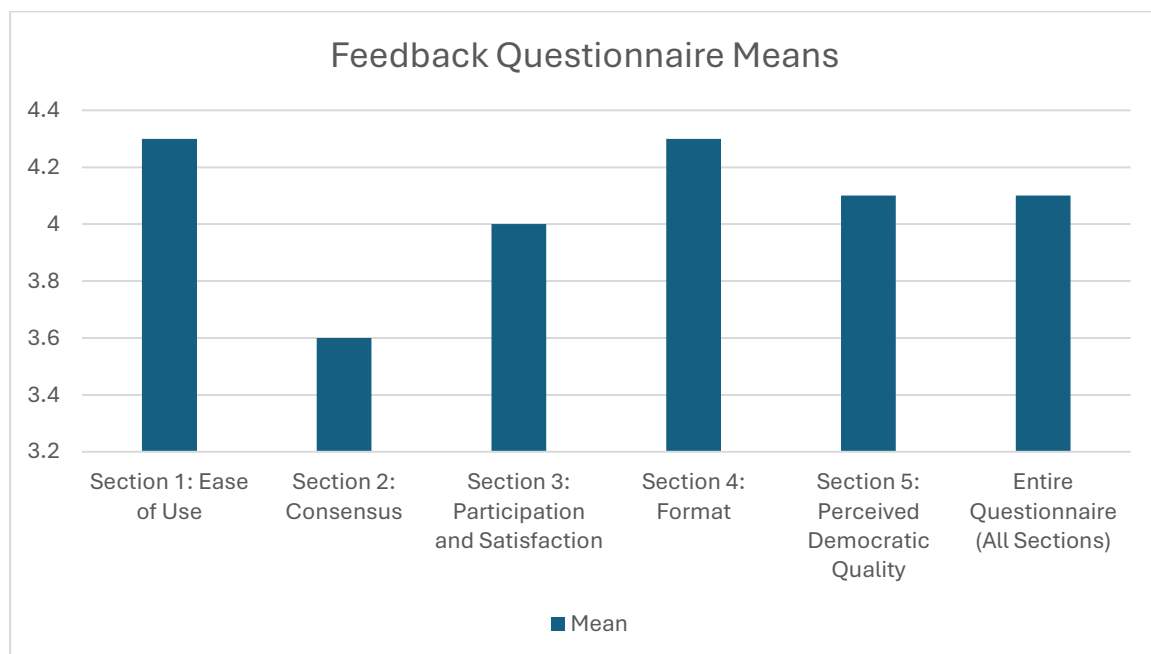
Source: Feedback Questionnaire

Central Tendency of the Feedback Questionnaire

The modal choice, the most common answer in the Feedback Questionnaire as well as in each section was the 'Agree' response. For all the whole questionnaire, the mean was 4.1. Figure 6 shows the mean for each of the Feedback Questionnaire's sections. Considering that the score for the 'Agree' response was 4, the mean and mode measures of central tendency, each assuming an interval and ordinal measurement scale respectively, result in similar central

tendency values for the questionnaire as a whole. Furthermore, the most common response in each section was 'Agree'. This central tendency measure suggests that the most common participant experience with the Discussion Exercise was one that aligned with the intended outcomes of the design of the forum. The mean measure varied between section, ranging from 3.6 to 4.3.

Attention Check

The response pattern to Q13, the 'negative' statement included to function as an attention check, showed a mirrored response pattern to Q12. Q12 was a positive statement of almost identical formulation to the negative statement of Q13. Of Q12's twenty-four responses, twelve chose 'Neutral', nine chose 'Agree', and two chose 'Strongly Agree'. Q13 saw nine chose 'Neutral', eight chose 'Disagree', and two chose 'Strongly Disagree'. As the word choice is not strictly inverted, "disagreement" and "common ground" could have been experienced by the same participants in Discussion Exercise, a perfectly inverted response pattern cannot be expected. However, the inversion of the response pattern is significantly similar. The negative statement has therefore shown that the participants' responses were not random or carelessly submitted. As a result, the data can be assumed to be relatively unspoiled.
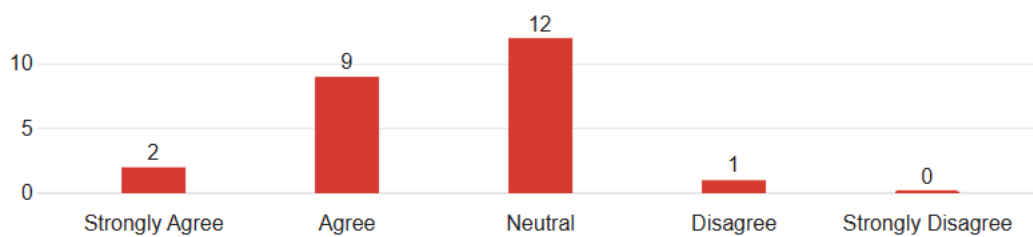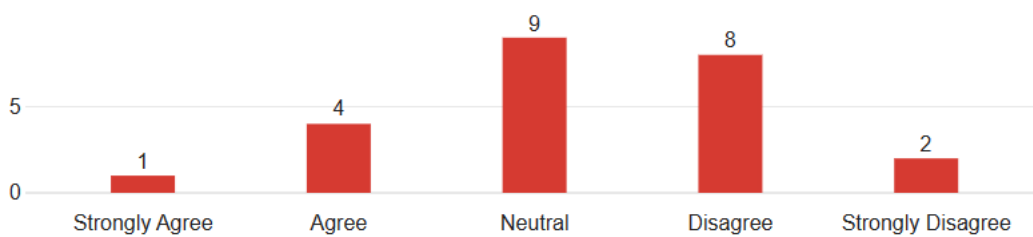
Figure 6 - Responses to Q12 and Q13 – 'Positive' and 'Negative' Statements

Thematic Analysis of Written Responses

Five themes emerged from participants' written responses. First, the idea that more time would have solved problems with the process, that the Discussion Exercise lacked time. This theme emerged out of expressions that engaging with the Discussion Exercise required time and effort – both of which were perceived as lacking in the process. Q31 and Q32 of the Feedback Questionnaire query this issue, finding that whether neither a desire for less or more time can be derived from the Likert-Scale responses, with a mean of 2.4 or 3.2 respectively, though more time was the more agreed upon measure of the two. Another theme was that the discussion felt unintuitive or not genuine. Deliberating on Reddit, online, typed, didn't feel like a discussion. A further theme was the clarity of the procedure, its objectives, and materials. Multiple written entries remarked on the clarity of their task as participants and the objectives of the Discussion Exercise, as well as the helpfulness of the materials given out to participants, including the flyer, webpage, and infographics that were included in emails. A fourth theme was a shared approval of the format, Reddit as a hosting platform and the Discussion Exercise's design generally. It is notable that a shared approval of Reddit as the host platform emerged alongside a theme of unintuitive discussion. Appreciation for the use of Reddit's toolkit for the Discussion Exercise emerged alongside the notion that the exchange of ideas did not feel genuine on the platform. The final theme was a personal interest in the study and the discussion. There were three facets to this interest. Interest in the internal reasoning brought on by the Discussion Exercise. Furthermore, the opportunity to consider and reflect on the expressed reasoning of other participants. Thirdly an interest in the study's proceedings and subject matter.

Table 6 - Likert-Scale Responses for Q31 and Q32

Likert 1-5 Response*	Responses Q31: Wanted Less Time	Responses Q32: Wanted More Time
Strongly Agree	1 (4.3%)	3 (13%)
Agree	2 (8.7%)	6 (26.1%)
Neutral	7 (30.4%)	7 (30.4%)
Disagree	9 (39.1%)	7 (30.4%)
Strongly Disagree	4 (17.4%)	0
Total	23 (100%)	23 (100%)

Likert 1-5 Response*	Score Q31: Wanted Less Time	Score Q32: Wanted More Time
Strongly Agree	5	15
Agree	8	24
Neutral	21	21
Disagree	18	14
Strongly Disagree	4	0
Total	**56**	**74**

	Q31: Wanted Less Time	Q32: Wanted More Time
Mode	Disagree	Neutral & Disagree
Mean	2.4	3.2

Note: Values rounded to one decimal place

Source: Feedback Questionnaire

5. Discussion

Key Findings

The data and analyses suggests that the Discussion Exercise succeeded in what it was designed to do: Host a deliberative process for policy making. Two iterations of a deliberative process seeking policy solutions to challenges were held with active participants and concluded with a voted resolution. The study succeeded in designing and simulating a formal deliberative process, though the findings are non-generalisable. The exercise hosted discussion that felt unintuitive and not genuine to participants and resulted in low voter turnout and failed to facilitate collaboratively constructed policy proposals. However, participants' experience with the Discussion Exercise indicates that the design succeeded in making the forum easy to use, and that participants considered the format of the Discussion Exercise appropriate for the purposes of a deliberative exercise. Furthermore, the design succeeded in participants perceiving the Discussion Exercise as a democratic process. Respondents were satisfied with their engagement with the exercise and that of their peers, as well as the role of the researcher as moderator. This study therefore answers the research questions and suggests that a digital forum for policy making can facilitate participation and be perceived as democratic. On the question of enabling consensus, it indicates tentative success.

Interpretations

The emergent theme of wanting the Discussion Exercise to last longer may reflect an intrinsic problem with the format. Checking in on multiple threads of new proposals, new comments, new replies is time-consuming and requires effort. It may reflect the high demand on a participant's attention required for something resembling a discussion to emerge. Additional time added to the Discussion Exercise may not remove this impression if the additional time results in more content to deliberate on. Written feedback complimented the efforts to promote clarity in objectives, tasks, and in the format of the study and the Discussion Exercise and indicates that the study's goal to facilitate participation through materials and emails was a success, correlating with the Likert-Scale central tendency for Ease-of-Use. The lack of genuine discussion as an emergent theme may explain the lower central tendency measure on consensus. For some, the format failed to enable satisfactory discussion and understanding of others' positions through written exchanges. The emergence of both a theme of approval for the use of Reddit and a theme of unintuitive or not genuine discussion

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suggests that some of Reddit's functionalities served to fulfil participants' expectations of their task and goals in the Discussion Exercise, but simultaneously did not facilitate a 'genuine discussion'. This analysis is corroborated by the complete lack of collaborative building of proposals, something the support materials tried to promote. The data showed high engagement with the 'upvote' function, while many participants did not comment or post a proposal. Participants may have found 'upvoting' an agreeable form of engagement, whereas using Reddit's functionality to propose, deliberate, and edit proposals seemed unintuitive. Reddit was not built for deliberation and collective construction. Its user interface may have been too difficult for some to grasp for a purpose it was not built for. Difficulties in participating were not due to frictions with digital technology or Reddit.com, or lack of experience with political engagement of this type, but with using Reddit.com for political deliberation and policy making.

Limitations

The sample population is not representative of the general population. As such, this study's conclusions are not generalisable to the wider population. The sample underrepresented people under the age of 25, overwhelmingly overrepresented those in tertiary education and those who have a level of education above secondary, and underrepresented unemployment. Furthermore, in the sample enrolled in tertiary education, students of social and political sciences were overrepresented. Participants were familiar with digital tools, although there was a lack of group experience using digital forums. Participants as a group were experienced in participating in politics. Furthermore, a sizeable cohort had specific experience in political forums. The sample population had a high level of previous political participation and experience in the type of engagement they are asked to do in the Discussion Exercise. This matches the expectations informed by Oser et al. (2014), and Anduiza & Tormos' (2022) findings that participants in this study would have previous political participation. Lack of funding for this research likely impacted the specificity of the sample. Compensation in shares offered by the collaborating organization, Tela Network, may have only served as incentive for participants with certain backgrounds. Access to funds would have enabled compensation in currency, possibly attracting participants from different backgrounds. Furthermore, lack of funds limited the channels used for recruitment. Funds would have permitted a more extensive recruitment effort to seek out a representative sample or a larger sample, which would have enabled more iterations of the Discussion Exercise for comparison. The choice of Reddit as the hosting platform was also influenced by the lack of

funds, as other, possibly more apt, platforms had to be discarded as options as the incurred a financial cost unassailable without funding. The use of Reddit as host platform meant that a perfect description of participation was impossible. Observation was limited to what was observable on the 'client-side' of the website. Observations across time could not be derived due to the lack of historical data that is displayed on Reddit, whereas that data may have been more easily observed on a different platform or with a larger team of observers. More time or a larger research team would have allowed for deeper data collection and analysis. Lastly, conclusions derived from the thematic analysis undertaken for the written feedback are limited by the researcher's 'inside' status. (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pg. 113) Knowledgeable of political studies, empirical research, and intimately familiar with the study and the Discussion Exercise, the researcher's reflexivity when discerning themes among participants' feedback is limited. Thematic analysis by multiple researchers would have eased this limitation.

Future Research

Participant feedback on a dissatisfying discussion and the Discussion Exercise's failure to enable consensus to suggest that future research could investigate the connection between online discussions that feel genuine and occur intuitively, and feelings of consensus. Future studies with the capacity to track patterns and forms of digital participation across time can fill the gap in describing how participation on a digital forum evolves across time. Future research that aims to evolve this study's design of a deliberative exercise can take lessons from this research in two directions. One is to simplify the design and limit the forum to upvotes and layered polls. This design would require less time and energy from participants, potentially benefitting the study with a large sample population, and would avoid the tension of a host platform not designed for deliberation. The other design direction is to deepen the discussion so as to foment genuine debate on a digital platform. Doing so would require a platform designed for deliberation and a design that safeguards participants' time and energy. A stage between a proposal and a voting stage could give participants time to take account of the available proposals without new being posted. A new design could integrate a 'cost' design per engagement, incentivising votes or proposals to be brief, prepared, and meaningful. A new design could incentivise the editing of proposals to address commented concerns or punish non-editors by un-listing unresponsive proposers. A process that lasts several weeks could integrate live events or non-written interaction between participants to punctuate the discussion with engagement that doesn't rely on written communication. All

these design suggestions work to remedy unsatisfactory online discussion, enable genuine discussion, and enable stronger feelings of consensus.

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(The translation for "首頁-公共政策網路參與平臺" is "Home Public Policy Network Engagement Platform")

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix I: Data Collection Methods

Copy of Initial Survey

Q2 - Gender
37 Responses

Non-binary / third gender [2.70%, 1]
Prefer not to say [2.70%, 1]

Female [37.84%, 14]

Male [56.76%, 21]
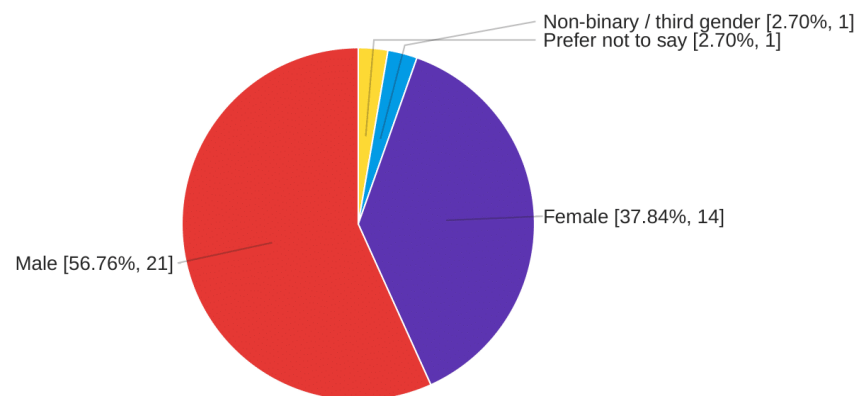
● Prefer not to say ● Non-binary / third gender ● Female ● Male

Q3 - Age

Age
29
33
64
25
22
53

21
21
21
36
21
21
59
57
22
25
23
22
23
22

Q5 - Please check this box if you do NOT want to receive shares in Tela as compensation for your participation.

14 Responses

0 ─────────────────────────────────────

I do not want to receive shares ...

● Choice Count
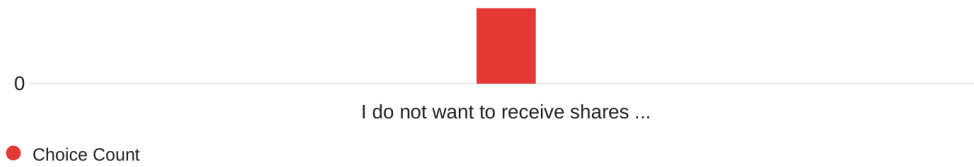
Q7 - What is the highest level of education you have completed?
37 Responses

14%, 5

3%, 1

27%, 10

35%, 13

22%, 8

● Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, Law Degree, Medical Degree etc)
● University - Bachelors Degree   ● Some University but no degree   ● Vocational or Similar   ● Secondary
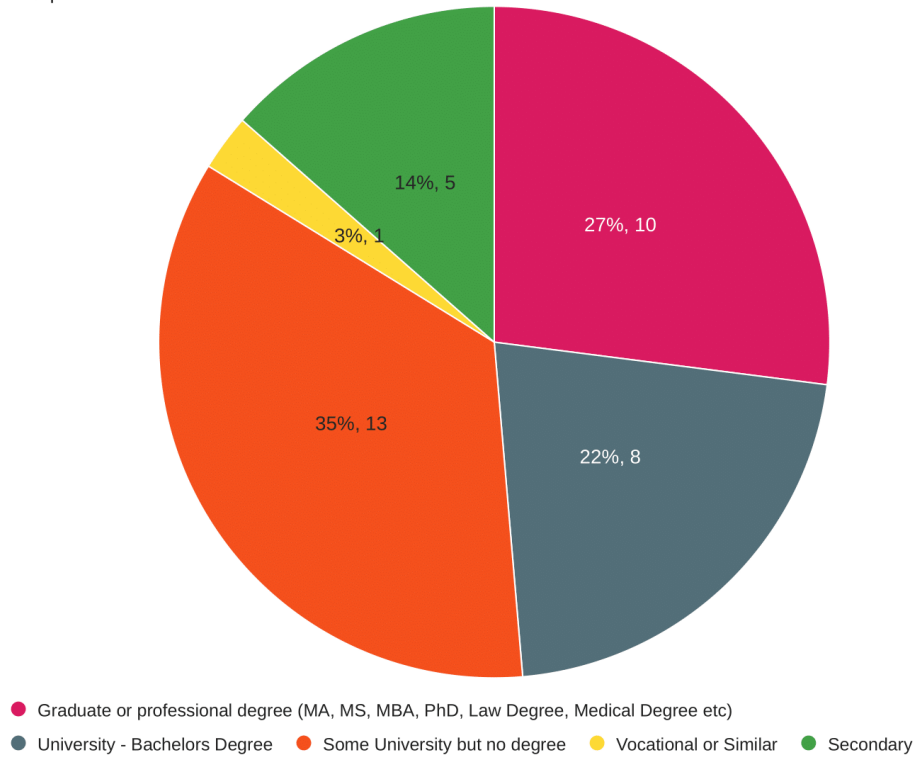
Q8 - What is you current employment status? - Selected Choice
37 Responses

20

0

Employed full-time | Employed part-time | Self-employed | Unemployed | Student | Retired | Other (please ...

● Choice Count

Q8_7_TEXT - Other (please specify) - Text

Other (please specify) - Text

Giving tutoring classes

In between jobs

Q9 - If you are currently in higher education, what is your subject area? - Selected Choice

28 Responses

Social & Political Sciences — 12
Humanities — 5
Culture & Creative Arts — 4
Other (please specify) — 3
Modern Languages & Cultures — 3
Psychology & Neuroscience — 2
Engineering — 2
Physics & Astronomy — 1
Law — 1
Education — 1
Computing Science — 1

● Choice Count
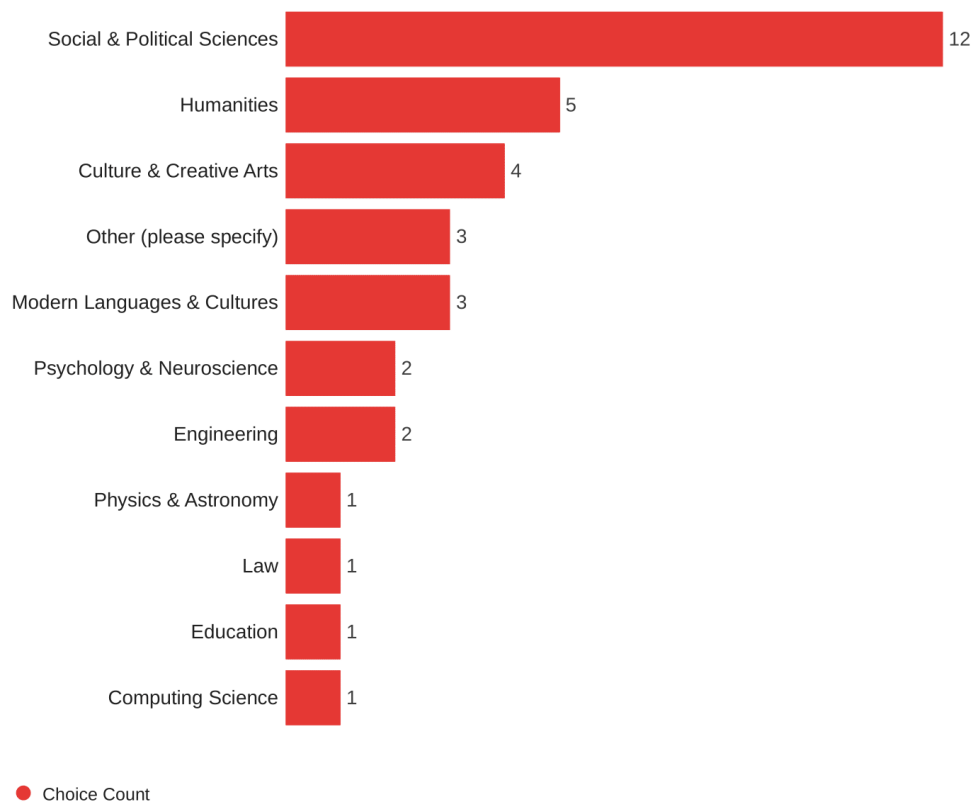
Q9_17_TEXT - Other (please specify) - Text

Other (please specify) - Text

History and Politics Degree

Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage

Biology

Q10 - If employed, please provide your industry/field of work:

22 Responses

If employed, please provide your industry/field of work:

Ad tech

Software

Education

Coffee beans

Facilities Management

Mediation

Employability at university

Hospitality

Hospitality Industry

HGV Driver

Civil service

Audio/recording industry

Swimming courses teaching

Bartender, hospitality

NGO

Software Developer

Education

Aquaculture

Used to be a product manager in the Internet finance industry.

Public affairs consulting

Q12 - How often do you use email?
37 Responses
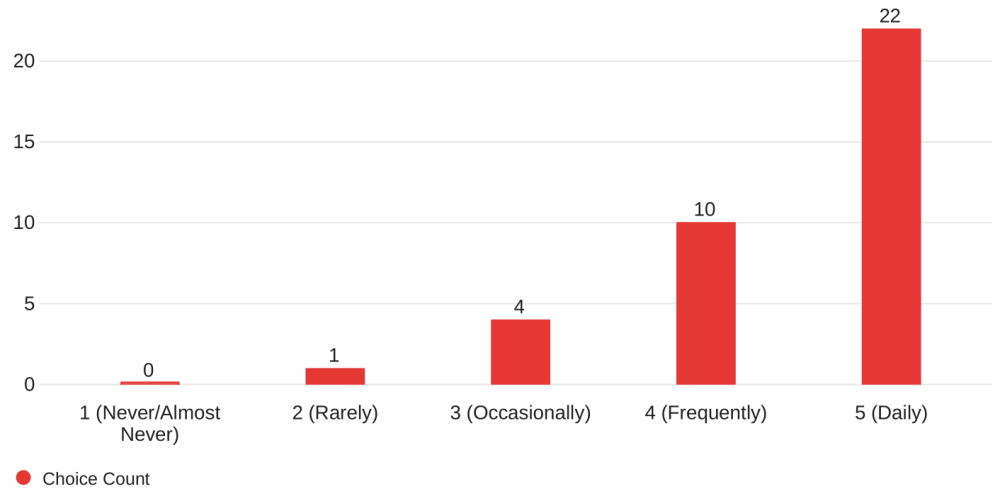
Q13 - How often do you browse the internet?
37 Responses
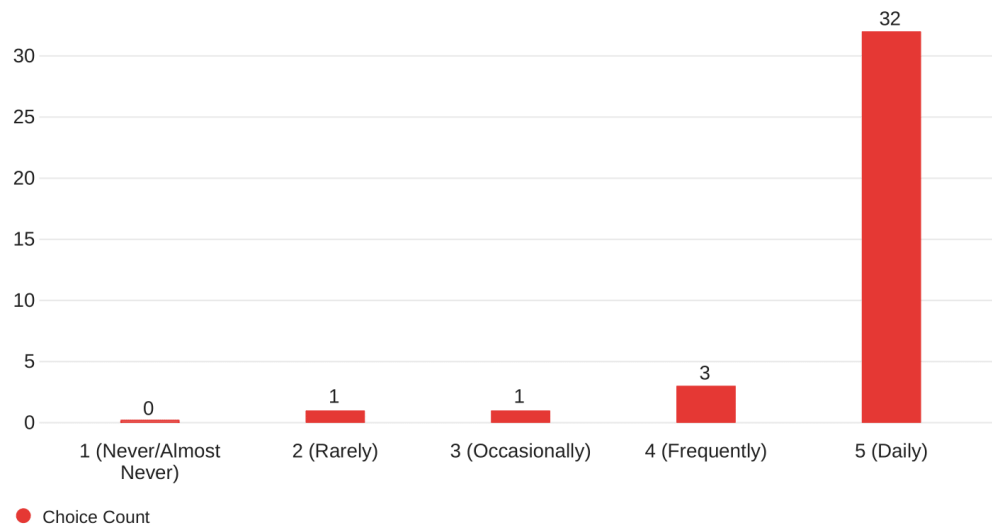
Q14 - How often do you browse or participate in online discussions or forums? (e.g., on Reddit, Discord, X, Facebook)

37 Responses

- ● Choice Count
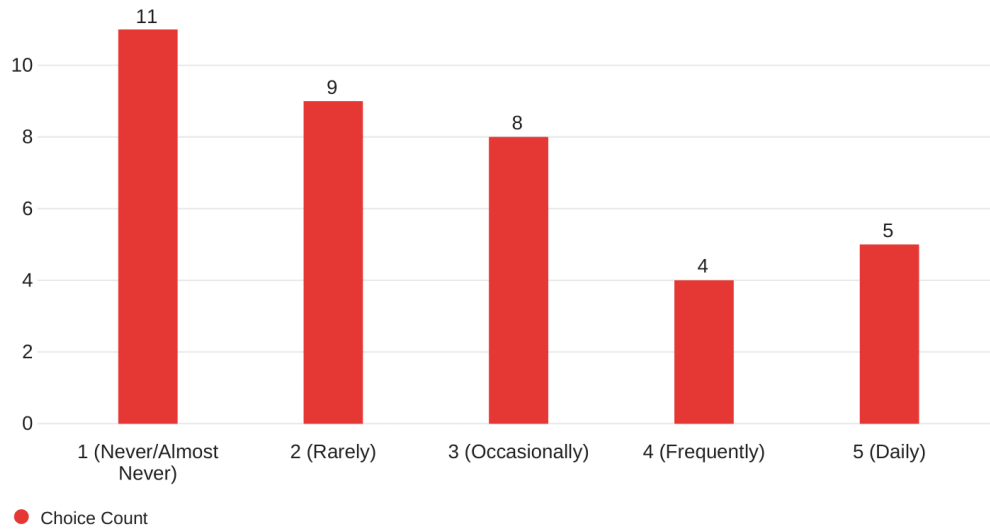
Q15 - How often do you use social media?

37 Responses

- ● Choice Count
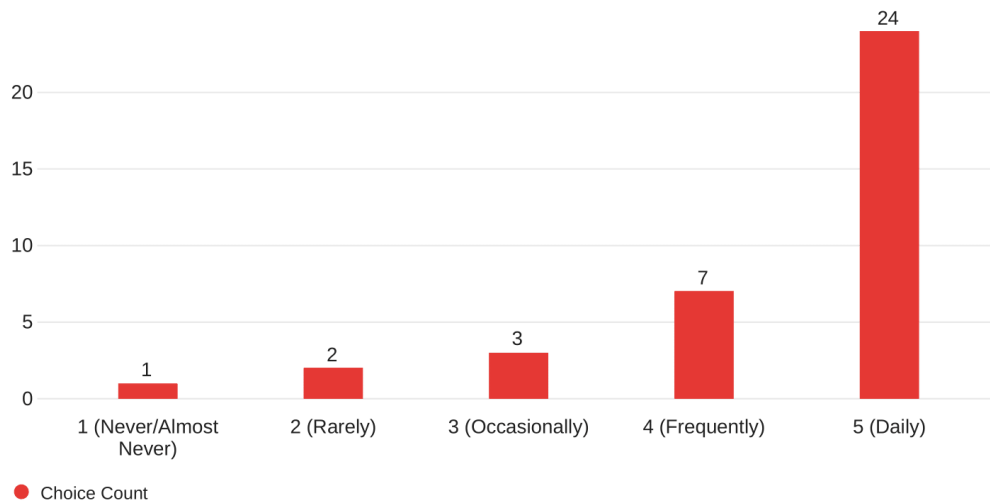
Q16 - How often do you use online collaboration tools? (e.g., Google Docs, Slack)

37 Responses
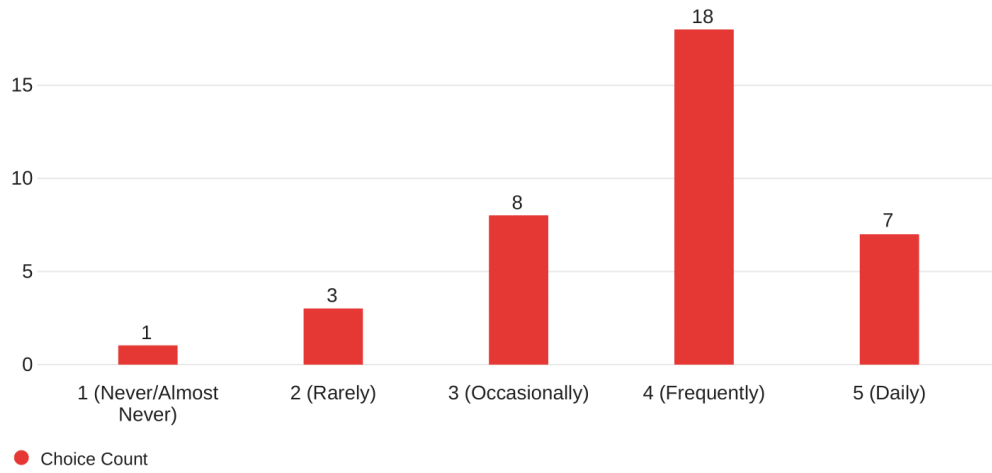
Q17 - Please select all of the activities you have personally done or
been involved with: (Select all that apply to you)
36 Responses

- Held a public office ● Worked in a government ● Worked in a party ● Displayed a badge
- Served on local boards or commissions (e.g., school board, planning commission)
- Participated in letter-writing campaigns ● Financially contributed to political campaigns or causes
- Been a member of an interest-based group (e.g., labour union, environmental orga...
- Attended a political forum (e.g., party meeting, town hall meeting) ● Contacted a politician
- Boycotted products for a political/ethical/environmental reason ● Taken part in public demonstrations
- Signed a petition ● Voted in a public office election (e.g., local election, general election)

Q18 - Do you have a preference for a group and its corresponding 'Challenge'?

36 Responses
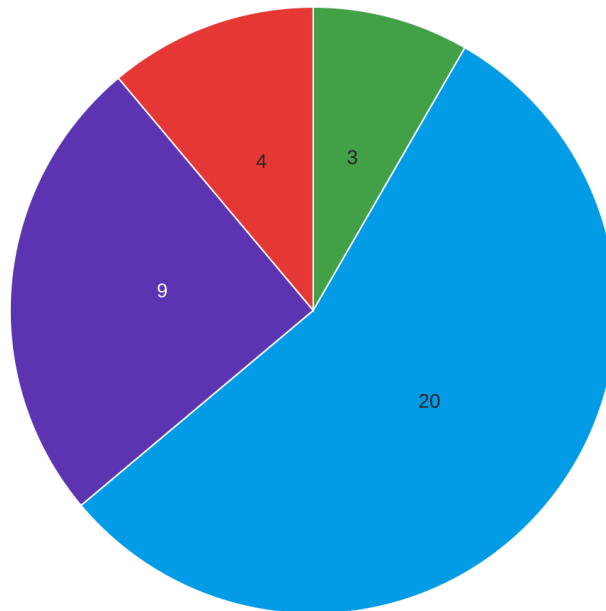
- ● No preference (randomly assigned)
- ● Group C - How should the democracies tackle low voter turnout among young people?
- ● Group B - How should digital networks regulate their users' speech?
- ● Group A - How should digital networks implement a legal 'due process'?

Q25 - By checking the box below and submitting this form, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the information provided in this consent agreement and the Participant Information Sheet. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

37 Responses

I consent to participate in the ...

- ● Choice Count

Section 1: Ease of Use

Q3 - You found participating in this study easy.

24 Responses
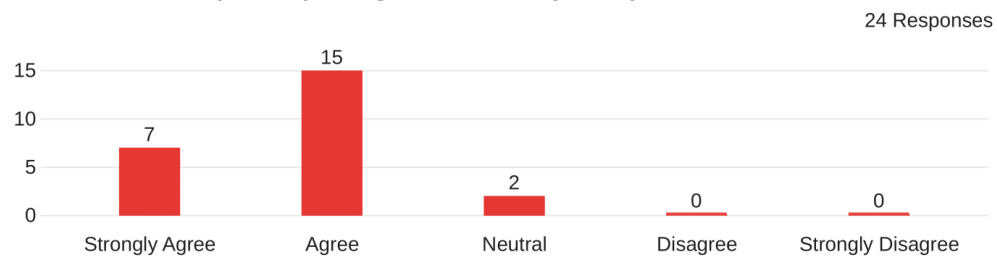
Q4 - You felt that the objectives of the Discussion Exercise, with a Proposal Stage and Voting Stage, were clear to you when it started.

24 Responses
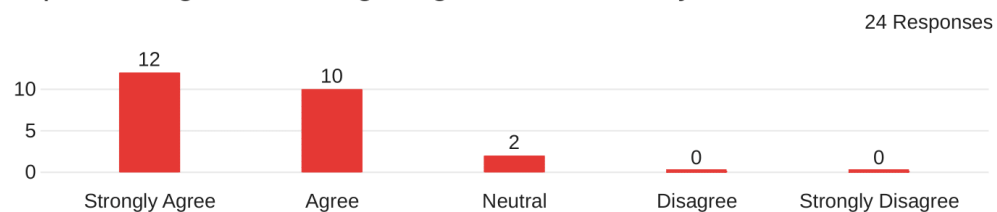
Q5 - You had no problems using the forum.

24 Responses
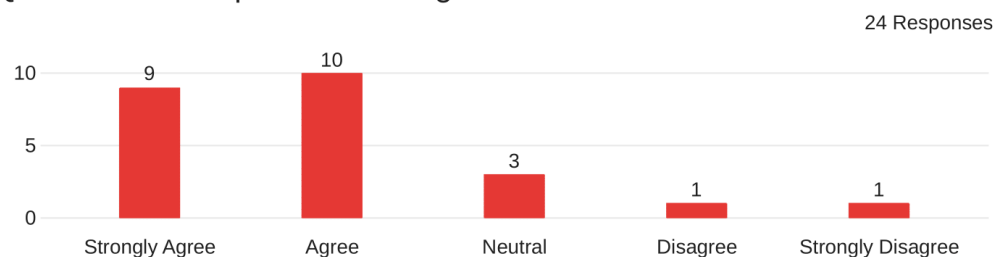
Q6 - You felt that you were provided with enough information to know what to do during the Discussion Exercise.

24 Responses
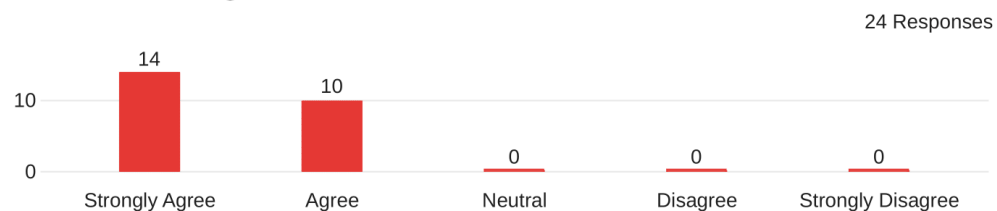
Q7 - You felt that you were able to follow along with the general discussion that was taking place during the Proposal Stage.

24 Responses

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	7	13	4	0	0
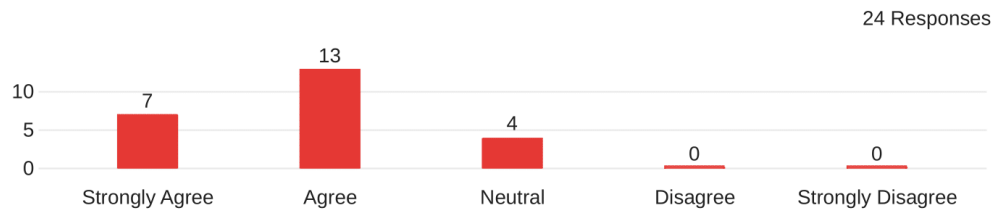
Q8 - It felt clear to you why the three choices you were asked to vote on were the ones that reached the Final Poll.

24 Responses

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	12	11	1	0	0
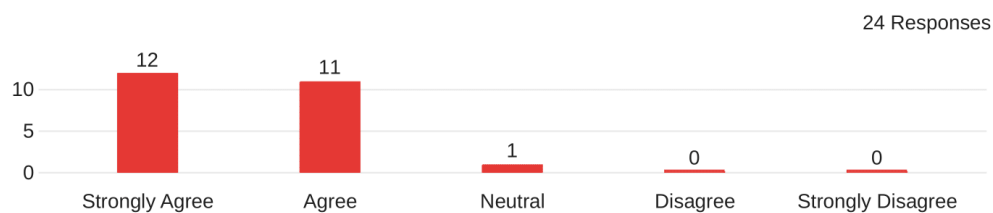
Q10 - Please share any additional comments about how easy or confusing you found the Discussion Exercise, and about how easy or confusing it was to participate in the study:

Please share any additional comments about how easy or confusing you found the Discussion Exercise, and about how easy or confusing it was to participate in the study:

Sorry I did not participate, other than just signing in to the private subReddit. Life got in the way. A longer time to write up the policy proposal could have helped.

I found the forum was slightly unintuitive to use. It wasn't immediately obvious by the layout how I would participate. It didn't feel like a discussion, but that may be due to the limitations of such online posting and my unfamiliarity with it, rather than anything that could realistically be addressed. I also didn't find it aesthetically pleasing. If I was to use a forum such as this to discuss things, I'd prefer it to be more engaging and pleasant to look at; I don't mean ads or annoying distractions like videos, but an un-invasive yet stylish UI.

I found participation easy, and the concepts behind the experiment very interesting.

I do know however of one other participant who found logging into Reddit with the pseudonym difficult (possibly down to their own technical ignorance however), but this is still something to bear in mind.

The flyers and website very clearly explained and illustrated the process, which helped very much.

A useful insight into digitial participation.

I found the process confusing to begin with, in addition my comments didnot show up on the discussion at the beginning.

I thought the whole study was well-organized and clear. The subject matter and how to grapple with the issues was the hard part. I was very interested in people's views and thoughts on how to proceed. I think a reddit-like forum is a valid and effective way to discuss issues. I hope it can be implemented somehow on a large scale.

If I were to point out any problems I had, I would say that I found it a bit difficult to keep up with the different proposals as they were posted at different times. I find that as new people posted new proposals towards the end of the discussion exercise, it became harder to keep track of all the different things that had already been posted. However, I found participating in the discussion quite easy with the option of upvoting opinions I agreed with.

I had never used Reddit before so that was new but I did find it relatively easy to participate once I got the hang of it. I felt it was a relatively transparent way to discuss and propose policies, however sometimes I felt like I could not get my point across typing it online compared to saying it in person. However, I enjoyed the ability to share my opinion and take time to read and understand others'.

An additional reminder between the signing up process and the day the study began would have maybe been beneficial. Over all, every aspect was well explained and easy to follow

It was good that everything was anonymized and that people had quite a long time to post and reply to other's posts. It was a good idea to use Reddit as it was an accessible platform for most.

I think it would benefit from being narrowed down. It's not about intelligence. If you're working a difficult job, then you don't always have the brainpower available to evaluate several different aspects of e.g. a forum and pick the right one.

I'd compare it to two types of shooter video game - open-map and guided-ride. The guided-ride approach pulls you along a predetermined route. To scale this forum to 10k users, I think a more guided-ride format would be good (e.g. simple polling). The core forum area should be accessible but a distinctly second-tier option for those who have brainpower energy. Also the time limits could be significantly extended - other things are higher up on the personal priority task lists... Obviously this doesn't apply to the study, which is time-sensitive - I'm referring to a potential genuine forum for a digital network.

I think Reddit was a great choice for this study, i enjoyed engaging with the other users and thinking for new policies, every step in the process was very clear! Hope it helps!

It was easy to participate but frustrating that the final options were not edited or updated to reflect other user's comments. I do not feel that it was a genuine back and forth discussion. It was therefore difficult to make a decision on what to vote for,

Section 2: Consensus

Q11 - You felt that result of the Final Vote represented a consensus.

24 Responses
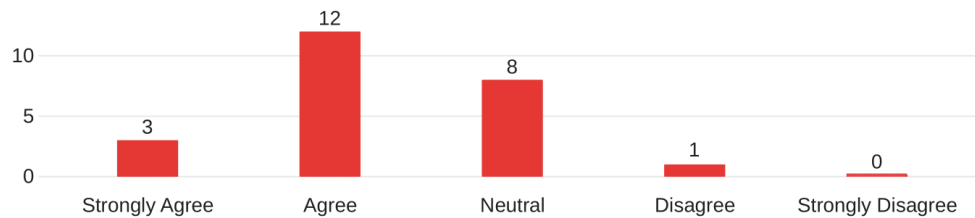
Q12 - You felt that discussion on the forum led to common ground.

24 Responses
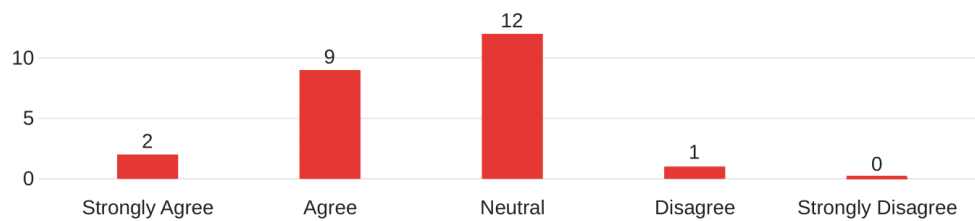
Q13 - You felt that the discussion on the forum led to disagreement.

24 Responses
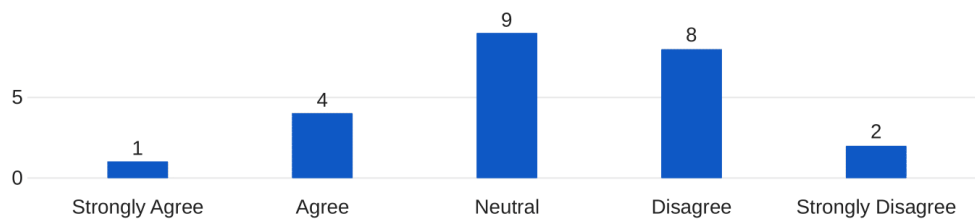
Note: Q13 is an attention check

Q14 - You felt that when disagreements emerged in discussions, they were resolved.

24 Responses

		14		
3	4		3	0
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
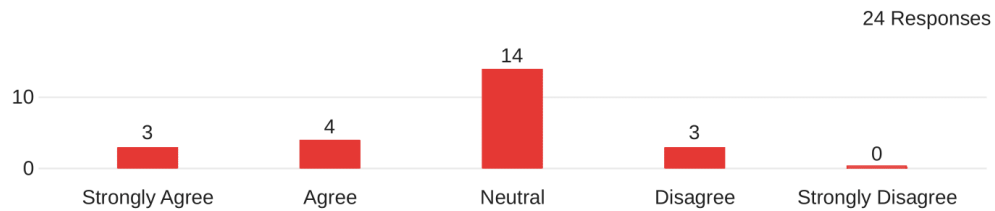
Q15 - Another participant's input caused you to reconsider your position.

24 Responses

	13			
3		5	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
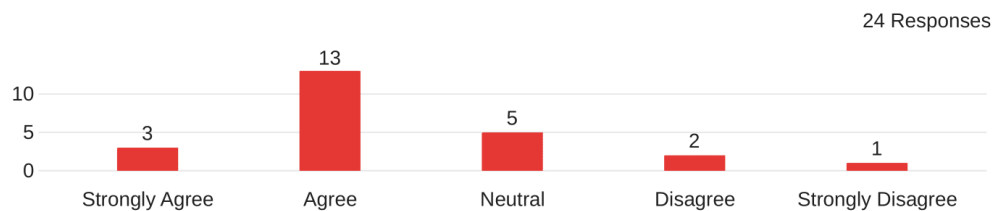
Q16 - You felt satisfied with the result of the Final Vote.

24 Responses

	15			
5		2	2	0
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
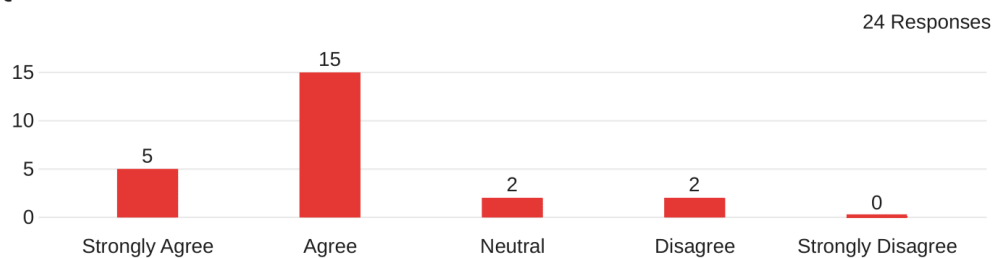
Q17 - Please share any additional comments about how easy or confusing you found the Discussion Exercise, and about how easy or confusing it was to participate in the study:

Please share any additional comments about how easy or confusing you found the Discussion Exercise, and about how easy or confusing it was to participate in the study:

Again, I didn't participate in any of the discussion. A longer time for discussion might have helped (allowing me to participate), and also perhaps those who started discussing first would influence those who enter into the discussion later.

I dislike not knowing who I'm talking to - even if we hadn't been given names for use on the forum, I find it too easy for people to post anonymously online, or pretend to be someone else. On this study, people were very polite, friendly and engaging; conversing with completely random people about politics online is in my (nowadays admittedly limited) experience, considerably less pleasant. Unless quite strictly moderated, in a forum in which users have to be identifiable and able to face consequences for bad behaviour (eg. a university Moodle forum), I don't think I would enjoy much discussion, let alone political discussion (inherently more sensitive and argument-prone) online.

Hearing the position of others, just as in normal conversation, does allow me to reflect on my own opinions, and for this reason I found it useful.

Overall, I had little trouble when participating in the survey.

I found the different opinion interesting.

As the subject matter was challenging, I did feel that I hadn't contributed enough ideas or solutions. But the grappling with the issues was a good exercise and worth the time.

The final vote was very close, and only 50% of people agreed with the winning option, which was reflected a minimum consensus. However, I feel like with a little longer to discuss (for example, if this study had been over 2 weeks), a greater consensus would have been reached so overall it was a good way to agree on a final decision.

I was already familiar with Reddit so I had no problem using the forum but I feel that if I wasn't familiar, following the instructions you provided would have made it easy to use, as the diagram was descriptive and concise.

It's very difficult to resolve conflict via text. I can see that perhaps a way to submit audio (together with an automated transcript that the participant can correct) would be a way to discuss rather than argue.

It was easy, maybe the most difficult part was to be checking the forum once in a while, it requires time and to be involved.

I do not feel like there was much actual discussion but rather several people speaking posting their ideas and then disappearing. I think there is huge potential for the forum to be used as place for political discussions but this requires users to visit the forum and interact with (their own original) posts regularly.

Section 3: Participation and Satisfaction

Q18 - You felt satisfied with the level of your participation in the discussion.

24 Responses

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	13	5	2	1
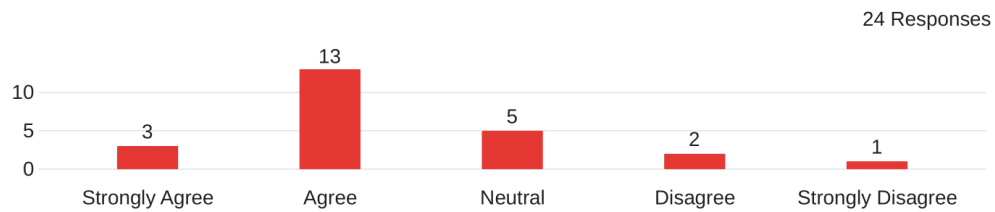
Q19 - You felt that your participation made a meaningful impact on the discussion and the final decision.

24 Responses

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	8	9	3	1
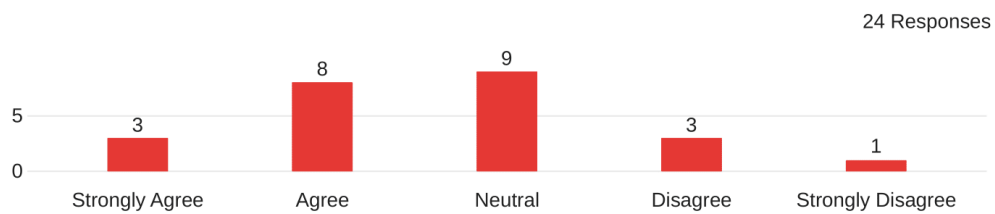
Q20 - You felt that other participants interacted genuinely with the discussion.

24 Responses

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	10	2	1	0
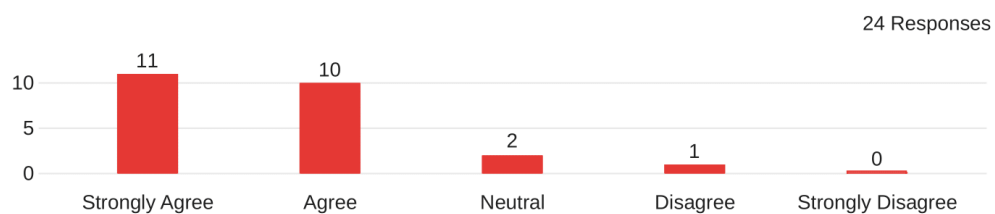
Q21 - You felt that other participants had a meaningful impact on the discussion and the final decision.

24 Responses

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8	13	3	0	0
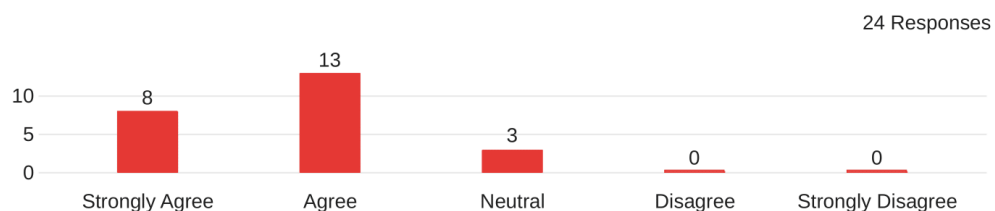
Q22 - You felt that the researcher was responsive and available if you had any questions or concerns.

24 Responses
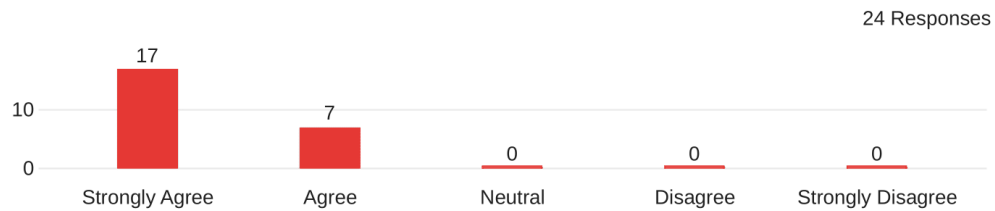
Q23 - Please share any additional comments about your participation and your level of satisfaction with the Discussion Exercise:

Please share any additional comments about your participation and your level of satisfaction with the Discussion Exercise:

I didn't manage to participate fully, as I missed the deadline for proposals and didn't engage with any discussion. If I had done so, I would have been more satisfied with my personal contribution, but I would still have the same concerns about online discussion such as this (not the study specifically).

Owing to an extremely busy week, ideally I would have liked to contribute more, and share thoughts on other's contributions, however this was largely something I did not get to do.

Can't think of anything else.

Even if I did not comment or challenge other opinions, I enjoyed reading them and thinking them through in my own time, which you couldn't do, for example, in a debate.

I am happy with my participartion, i think people liked my proposal and the reaercher was there always!

It was frustrating that many users only visited the forum once and did not return to consider comments made on their posts. However, I do not think this is reflective of real world use of Reddit so I am optimistic that such discussion exercises have great potential to enable political debate.

Section 4: Format

Q24 - You felt that the forum was fair.

23 Responses

Strongly Agree: 10
Agree: 13
Neutral: 0
Disagree: 0
Strongly Disagree: 0
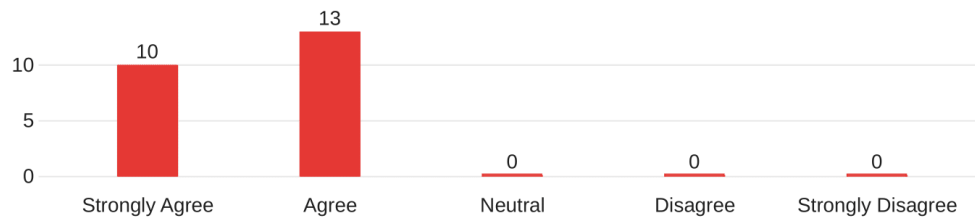
Q25 - You felt that the forum allowed participants to express themselves.

23 Responses

Strongly Agree: 15
Agree: 8
Neutral: 0
Disagree: 0
Strongly Disagree: 0
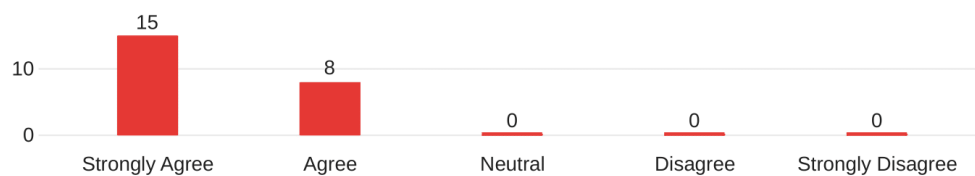
Q26 - You felt that 'Upvotes' were a useful tool for deciding on the most appropriate proposal.

23 Responses

Strongly Agree: 7
Agree: 12
Neutral: 2
Disagree: 2
Strongly Disagree: 0
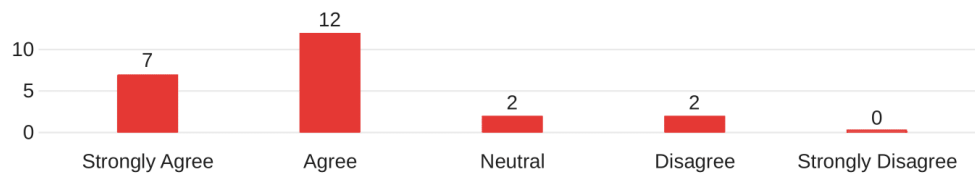
Q27 - You felt that public comments were a useful tool for deciding on the most appropriate proposal.

23 Responses

Strongly Agree: 7
Agree: 14
Neutral: 0
Disagree: 2
Strongly Disagree: 0
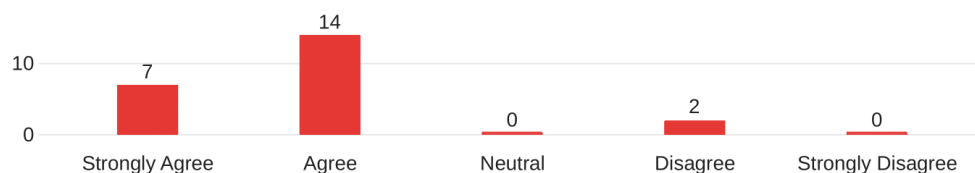
Q28 - You felt that Proposals in the form of 'Posts' were a useful tool for deciding on the most appropriate proposal.

23 Responses

Strongly Agree	8
Agree	13
Neutral	1
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	0
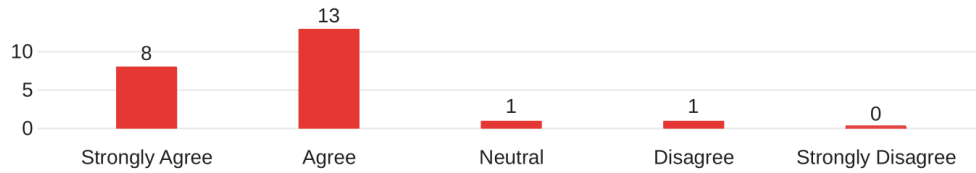
Q29 - You felt that 'Challenge' was interesting and it motivated you to participate

23 Responses

Strongly Agree	10
Agree	11
Neutral	1
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	0
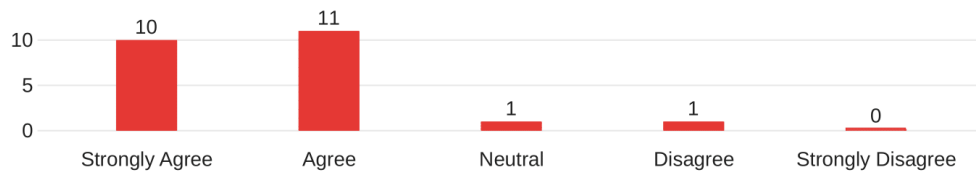
Q30 - You felt that the Discussion Exercise as 'a whole' was a useful tool for reaching a solution.

23 Responses

Strongly Agree	10
Agree	12
Neutral	0
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	0
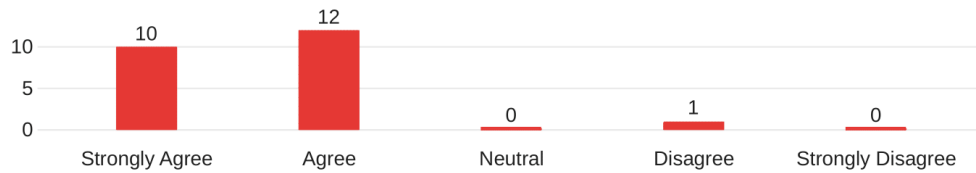
Q31 - You would have preferred if the Proposal Stage lasted for a shorter amount of time.

23 Responses

Strongly Agree	1
Agree	2
Neutral	7
Disagree	9
Strongly Disagree	4
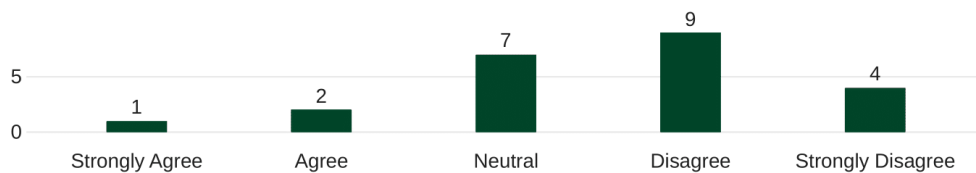
Q32 - You would have preferred if the Proposal Stage lasted for a longer amount of time.

23 Responses
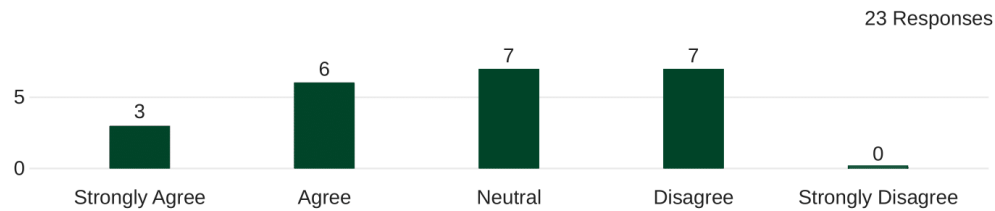
Note: Q31 and Q32 are not included in the Likert-Scale scores for analysis in the research.

Q33 - Please share any additional comments about the format of the Discussion Exercise:

Please share any additional comments about the format of the Discussion Exercise:

Reddit was an ideal forum to conduct the survey, however of course this is an idea and concept that is in its infancy. The limitations of methods of choosing the most appropriate proposal can be overcome by use of different methods.
Overall, I fell it was a well-done study.

I find that possibly adding another stage where everyone engages with the proposals made without adding new ones would have been beneficial. Like this all the proposals would be equally considered rather than have the first ones posted have more engagement.

I suspect that upvotes should cost something. This would motivate participants to allocate resources (votes) more carefully.

I like the upvotes but maybe if the system could add a comment with the upvote we can have more information on why that subject voted that

Section 5: Perceived Democratic Quality

Q35 - You felt that the forum was a democratic decision-making process.

23 Responses
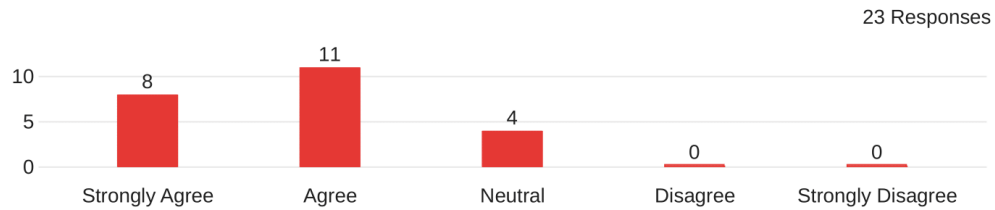
Q36 - You felt that all participants had equal opportunities to have their say in the forum.

23 Responses
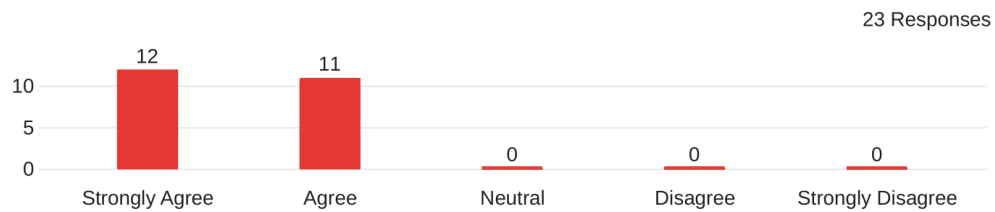
Q37 - You felt that the discussion was balanced and was not dominated by one or a few participants.

23 Responses
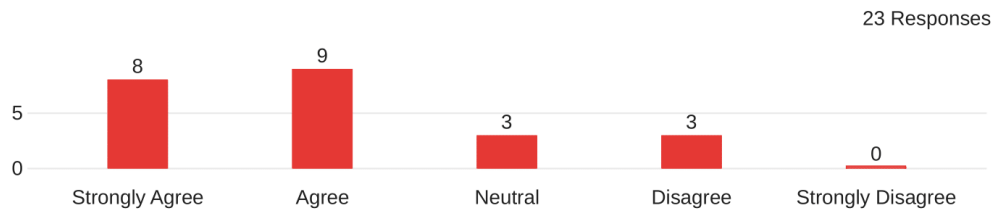
Q38 - You felt that the final voted decision was representative of the collective effort of all participants.

23 Responses
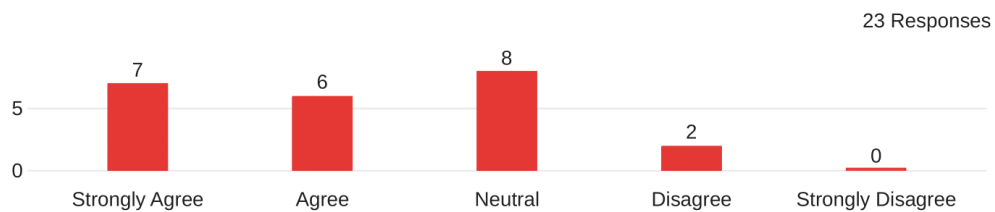
Q39 - Please share any additional comments about the Discussion Exercise quality of democracy:

Please share any additional comments about the Discussion Exercise quality of democracy:

Simple 'upvotes' do not allow for nuanced opinions on a proposal. I don't want to give something an upvote unless I agree completely with it; but a proposal with genuinely useful points as well as some not so useful ones would potentially be missed, especially if people don't read each proposal carefully, and skim to see the popularity of them. More detailed discussion is useful, but useful points can be missed unless people read posts carefully, and again without keeping discussions small and quite tightly moderated, I wouldn't be willing to take so much time to go through discussions (and would avoid it altogether if it was anything like a "discussion" on X, formerly Twitter). And basing posts on popularity means potentially rewarding people for writing manipulatively (through writing style, emotional appeals, etc). Or simply rewarding people who write in a more interesting way that is easier to engage with than others.

There were limitations of course, especially in the use of upvotes, however these are the same limitations that also exist in any contemporary democracy- some information being more visible than others for example. Ultimately, a form of democracy without the existence of these drawbacks is impossible.

Maybe it would have been good to have an additional stage of the study in which participants have to create three proposals together and then vote on those instead of the previous proposals

Well.... unfortunately, democracy / consensus is always going to tend to filter out things which:
- are unpleasant to hear
- are difficult to grasp

It's an inherently anti-excellence political system.

But OTOH, the more aristocratic systems tended to be more brittle / less adaptive.

I felt i could express myself freely as well as others could, very democratic

Q41 - Please share any additional comments or feedback about your experience with the study:

Please share any additional comments or feedback about your experience with the study:

I found the topic and the views of others interesting.

Very well thought out and well done!

A really interesting study :)

Pretty interesting experiment overall.

Thanks for this opportunity, it was a great experience, very well planned and rich in details, hope it helps!!

This was a novel and interesting study and I am happy I participated

Q40 - If you would like to receive some of the research findings, please select what you would like to be sent:

20 Responses
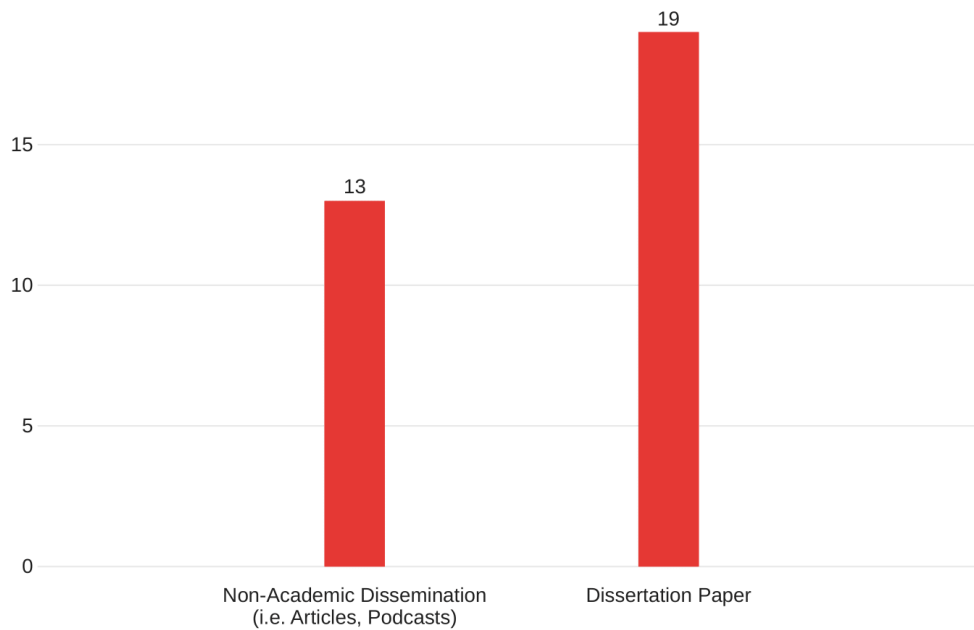
7.2 Appendix II: Recruitment Materials

Information Page

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION PAGE

for

'DIGITAL FORUMS
FOR
POLICY MAKING'
-
an empirical study

This page provides all the information you need as a to know about participating in this study.

Complete THIS survey to begin your participation!

Aims of the Study:

To test the use of **a digital forum as a space for discussing and proposing policy**, and measure the ease of use, user participation, perceived quality of democracy, and consensus-building capacity of the test.

"Why should I participate?"

- **YOUR VOICE MATTERS** and it is not being heard. Help test a design where your voice matters.
- **COMPENSATiON** for your time is available as 15 shares in TELA, a messaging platform for professionals.
- **DISCUSS URGENT ISSUES** with other participants and decide on solutions together.

Participation:

Your participation involves 3 STEPS:
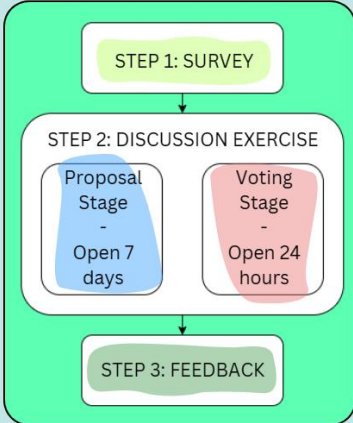
Step 1 is an ONLINE SURVEY.
You will be asked for information to help the researcher analyze data, as well your contact details and consent.

Step 2 is a DISCUSSION EXERCISE.
A simulated decision-making process where you will discuss and propose policy regarding a 'Challenge'.

Step 3 is a FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE.

You will be contacted via the email you provide in the SURVEY about the dates for the DISCUSSION EXERCISE.

*You will be given **10 shares for completing Step 2** and **5 additional shares for completing Step 3**.*

STEP 1: SURVEY

STEP 2: DISCUSSION EXERCISE

Proposal Stage - Open 7 days

Voting Stage - Open 24 hours

STEP 3: FEEDBACK

Discussion Exercise

The discussion exercise is **the main body of this study**. You and other participants are tasked to **propose and discuss policy solutions to a 'Challenge' and vote on the proposals**, thus simulating a decision-making process
It ill begin on the 29th of January 2024.

It has **2 STAGES**.

1) The **PROPOSAL STAGE**, where you and other participants will have **7 DAYS** to engage with the 'Challenge' and each others' proposals online.

2) The **VOTING STAGE**, where you and other participants will have **24 HOURS** to cast your vote for the best policy between the three most popular proposals.

Both stages of the Discussion Exercise will be hosted on a private community on Reddit.

You will be provided with an pseudonymous account by the researcher for privacy.

A link to the community and details to your account will be sent to the contact email you provide in the Survey.

What to do in the Discussion Exercise

5 TASKS

1. Post proposals
2. Comment on proposals
3. Upvote proposals

4. Reply to comments
5. Edit proposals

(this is what the forum will look like)

Test_Discussion_Group (Joined)
r/Test_Discussion_Group

Create Post

Hot | New | Top | ···

📌 PINNED BY MODERATORS
Posted by u/Guillermo_P_Murphy 1 hour ago
CHALLENGE: How should digital platforms implement a legal 'due process'?
0 Comments | Share

Posted by u/A_Study_Participant 2 hours ago
Make a digital jury system
We can get users to weigh in on whether accounts should be banned or reinstated.
The platform should randomly select non-contacts of the banned account, or account-to-be-banned, and have them weigh on the case.
Though this may clog the system and demand more human oversight, it presents an appeals system where the user-base has more weight.
2 Comments | Share

r/Test_Discussion_Group · Posted by u/A_Study_Participant 4 days ago
Make a digital jury system
We can get users to weigh in on whether accounts should be banned or reinstated.
The platform should randomly select non-contacts of the banned account, or account-to-be-banned, and have them weigh on the case.
Though this may clog the system and demand more human oversight, it presents an appeals system where the user-base has more weight.
2 Comments | Share | Save | ···

Post Insights
Only you and mods of this community can see

21 | 100% | 1
Total Views | Upvote Ra | Total Shares

Comment as A_Study_Participant
What are your thoughts?

Edit Post
Hide
Delete
Mark As Spoiler
Mark As NSFW
Send Me Reply Notifications

Your participation in the Discussion Exercise should look something like this:

1. **Read proposals**. Ask yourself: *Do I think this would be a good policy?* If YES...
2. **Upvote!** Once the Proposal Stage closes you will vote on the three most upvoted posts, so upvote those posts you'd like to see in the Voting Stage.
3. **Write and post your own policy proposal.** Can you think of any ways you've seen this Challenge or similar issues tackled? Can you think of a good way to address the problem? Post it and see if with others' input you can come up with good policy!
4. **Discuss!** Respond to comments on your Post. Reply to others' posts or comments on other posts. Collaborate with your peers to achieve the best policy!
5. **Edit your proposal** if your peers suggest good additions. Remember, the aim of the exercise is to collectively come up with the best policy solution.

What is a **POLICY PROPOSAL**?
A brief outline of a suggested course of action to address a specific issue or problem.

How do you write one?
Answer these three questions in your proposal:
1. **WHAT** is your suggested course of action? (Objectives, desired outcome)
2. **HOW** would you take that course of action? (Changes to be implemented)
3. **WHY** is this the right course of action? (Pros and Cons)

The 'Challenge'

Each participant will be assigned to a group of their preference.
Each group is assigned a different 'Challenge' to discuss and propose policy to.

You don't have to have a preference! You will be randomly assigned to a group if you don't.

	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
'CHALLENGE'	How should digital platforms implement a legal 'due process'?	How should digital platforms regulate their users' speech?	How should democracies tackle low voter turnout among young people?
Problem	There is currently no effective means to appeal or settle a dispute between users, and between users and the digital platform, on major social media platforms. These platforms are increasingly necessary for some peoples' livelihoods. Outside of aappealing to the platform creators, there is currently no claimant or appeal system against defamation and 'cancellation.	There are great content moderation expectations on large social media firms to limit false information, hate speech, and extremism on their platforms. The measures taken on some platforms have been criticized for being too extreme, too lax, or biased. As of yet, there is no consensus on how much and how speech should be regulated on social media.	Low voter turnout, a phenomenon increasingly present in democratic countries, is a sign of ill-health in democratic systems. For example, in the UK: Voters aged 18-24 present the lowest turnout among the age cohorts, where it is just above 50%. The UK average is 67.3%.
Some Context	1) "...Inadequate and unbalanced content moderation and legal architecture developed by the digital gatekeepers. [...] There is a clear and present need to ensure justice is done within the international digital community." 2) I'm banned for life from advertising on Meta. Because I teach Python. — Reuven Lerner	1) Social media: How might it be regulated? - BBC News 2) How the EU's Digital Services Act could affect online expression in the U.S. (slate.com)	1) Age and voting behaviour at the 2019 General Election - The British Election Study
Example Proposals	1/ Make a digital jury system. 2/ Select users to weigh in on contested account bannings by randomly selecting non-contacts of the banned account. 3/Though this may clog the system and demand more	1/ Add 'friction' to social media that prevents rapid sharing of information 2/ Public posts take 1 hour to be made public after they are published. 3/ Disinformation and hate speech cannot spread in	1/ Make voting compulsory 2/ Impose a civil offence charge on non-voters. 3/ It may cause people to vote without being motivated, but it may drive people to become informed and will lead to more people

contested account bannings by randomly selecting non-contacts of the banned account.

3/Though this may clog the system and demand more human oversight, it presents an appeals system where the users have weight on the outcome and the system avoids internal corruption.

sharing of information

2/ Public posts take 1 hour to be made public after they are published.

3/ Disinformation and hate speech cannot spread in public forums as rapidly. This prevents snowballing of false information and hate parades.

charge on non voters.

3/ It may cause people to vote without being motivated, but it may drive people to become informed and will lead to more people voting.

THANK YOU!
You can access the Survey (Step 1) and begin your participation by clicking this LINK or scanning this code:

PRIVACY

All your personal information will be kept private. Only the researcher will be able to access the data and to associate your data with yourself.

RESEARCHER CONTACT

Please contact the researcher if you have any questions and issues:

Guillermo Pablos Murphy
2527948p@student.gla.ac.uk
linkedIn

CONSENT

Consent to participate in this research may be retracted at any time with no penalty. You may cease your participation at any time.
Please inform the researcher if you no longer plan to participate.

Your – Voice – Matters

HELP TEST
THE POLITICS OF
TOMORROW

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

WHAT:

Participate in a digital forum for discussing policy solutions to urgent problems facing the digital space and democracy.

WHY:

- **YOUR VOICE MATTERS** and it is not being heard. Help test a design that can change that.
- **COMPENSATION** for your time is available as shares in *Tela*, a messaging app for professionals.
- **DISCUSS URGENT ISSUES** with other participants and decide on solutions together.

WHEN & WHERE:

On a digital forum starting this **JANUARY 29th**! To participate fill out the SURVEY on the back of this flyer!

HOW:

- **Step 1** is an online survey.
- **Step 2** of is a discussion exercise. You will discuss and propose policy regarding a 'Challenge' with others and eventually vote on the most popular proposals.
- **Step 3** is a feedback questionnaire.

STEP 1: SURVEY

↓

STEP 2: DISCUSSION EXERCISE

| Proposal Stage - Open 7 days | Voting Stage - Open 24 hours |

↓

STEP 3: FEEDBACK
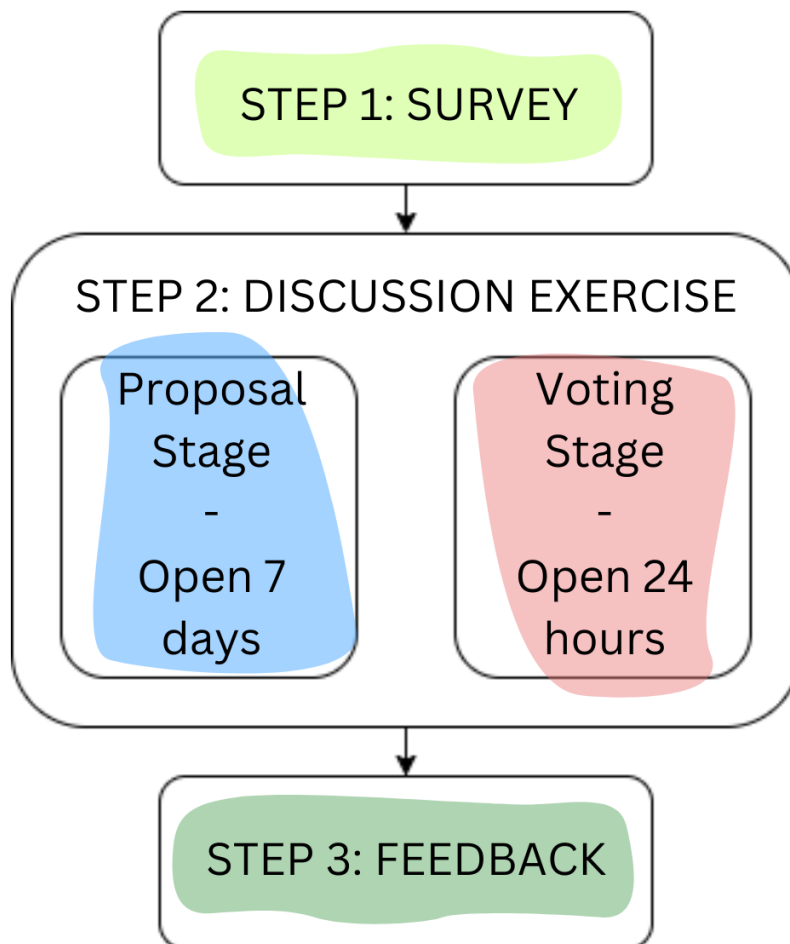
For more information, visit this
Information Page:

To begin participating, fill out this
SURVEY (Step 1):

*If you have any questions,
contact me (the researcher)
here:*
Guillermo Pablos Murphy
2527948p@student.gla.ac.uk

Infographic

Tela Blog   🔍

The Politics Of Tomorrow - Make Your Vote Count

Guillermo Pablos Murphy

Dec 23, 2023   2 min

"... I believe this research can provide practical lessons for the democratic tools of the future. I believe your voice should be heard."

The future of digital governance will affect all of us.

Help us change it for the better.

Your
Voice
Matters

HELP TEST
THE POLITICS OF
TOMORROW

Flyer
4-page recruitment flyer
Flyer.pdf • 1 MB

I want to invite you to participate in a study called '**Digital Forums for Policy Making**'.

This study has been a long-time coming. It has now been approved by my university's Ethics Board. Now comes the most important step: You!

Your voice matters. Our politics should reflect that.

What does the study involve?

Three Steps:

- Step 1 is a survey.
- Step 2 is a discussion exercise.
- Step 3 is a feedback questionnaire.

In late January 2024, you and other participants will imagine, discuss, and propose policy during a discussion exercise (Step 2) addressing one of the following 'Challenges':

The three 'Challenges'

If you need more context for each one, click here and scroll to 'The Challenge' section.

1) How should digital platforms implement a legal 'due process'?

2) How should digital platforms regulate their users' speech?

3) How should the democracies tackle low voter turnout among young people?

You and the other participants will discuss proposals pseudonymously, and eventually be asked to vote on a resolution.

Why should you participate?

Three reasons:

- **Make your voice be heard**. We are testing a new system for democratic decision-making that can directly reflect your and other participants' desires.
- **Compensation**. As this is part of a collaboration with Tela Network, a messaging app for professionals, they can offer you shares.
- **Discuss urgent issues.** You will be able to address pressing issues with other participants with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and knowledge.

I believe this research can improve the democratic tools of the future.

I believe your voice should be heard.

If you would like to participate, you can find more information about the study here, and you can fill in Step 1 (the survey) here.

Thank you, and onwards!

> *Send me questions about participating in this study to this email account: 2527948p@student.gla.ac.uk*

> *Send me any other questions and inquiries through my Tela link:*
> *tela.app/id/guillermo_pablos_murphy/621afa*

Tela Network will publish the results of this project in blog and podcast form on social media.

7.3 Appendix III: Support Materials

First Email - (Note: No email was sent on the 5th day, although the first email says there would be an email sent then)

Subject: Study Participation 29/01/2024

Dear []

First, thank you for volunteering to participate in 'Digital Forums for Policy Making'. It is because of you that this study can happen.

This is a reminder that on the 29th of January, at 00:00 Greenwich Mean Time (UTC), the study will begin. You will receive an email signalling that the study has begun with two things:

> **1. A link to a private Reddit forum.**
> **2. A username and password to your account for the forum.**

You will be discussing and proposing solutions to the following 'Challenge': []

If you have any questions leading up to or during the Discussion Exercise, please don't hesitate to contact me at this email: 2527948p@student.gla.ac.uk

Once again, thank you.

Guillermo Pablos Murphy

-

Emails

You will receive **three** emails as reminders to log on and engage with the forum before the Proposal Stage closes. These will be on the 3rd day, 5th day, and last day of the Proposal Stage (31/01/2024, 02/02/2024, and 04/02/2024

You will be emailed **once** when the Proposal Stage closes on 05/02/2024. This will mark the opening of the Voting Stage.

You will be emailed **one last time** after the Voting Stage has closed. This last email will contain the final vote result and a link to a feedback questionnaire.

[end of Emails]

Details

1. <u>8-DAY STRUCTURE (29/01/2024 – 05/02/2024)</u>

The discussion exercise is testing a collective decision-making system. This system works in two stages, the **Proposal Stage** and the **Voting Stage.**

- The **Proposal Stage** is 7-day window where you are asked to use the forum to discuss solutions to the 'Challenge'. (00:00, 29/01/2024 – 23:59, 04/02/2024)
- The **Voting Stage** is a 24-hour window where you are asked to cast a vote for one of the three most popular proposals that arose from the Proposal Stage. (00:00 – 23:59, 05/02/2024) The vote will be held via three-way poll on the forum.

2. <u>WRITING A POLICY PROPOSAL</u>

Here is a guide for a short proposal. A proposal doesn't have to look like this, but it's a good format for getting an idea across simply.

For example:

Challenge: 'How should democracies tackle low voter turnout among young people?'

Proposal:

1/ Make voting compulsory

2/ Charge people who abstain from voting with a fine.

3/ Pros:

- It will incentivise people to vote.
- It has real world examples of it working - Australia
- It could drive people to become informed.

Cons:

- People might vote without being motivated
- Some people will just pay the fine.

3. ENGAGING WITH IDEAS AND PROPOSALS

Your participation can look something like this:

1. **Post Proposals**: If you can think of a solution, post it!

2. **Engage with others' Proposals**: Read through others' proposals. **Upvote** them if they are good ideas. **Comment** on them if there are details that need clarifying, or if you can suggest improvements.

3. **Discuss** in comment sections. See if there are ways that people's ideas can be improved, or how they can improve your ideas!

4. **Edit your Proposal**: *If* you the discussion in the comments produces improvements on your original proposal, edit it to reflect that!
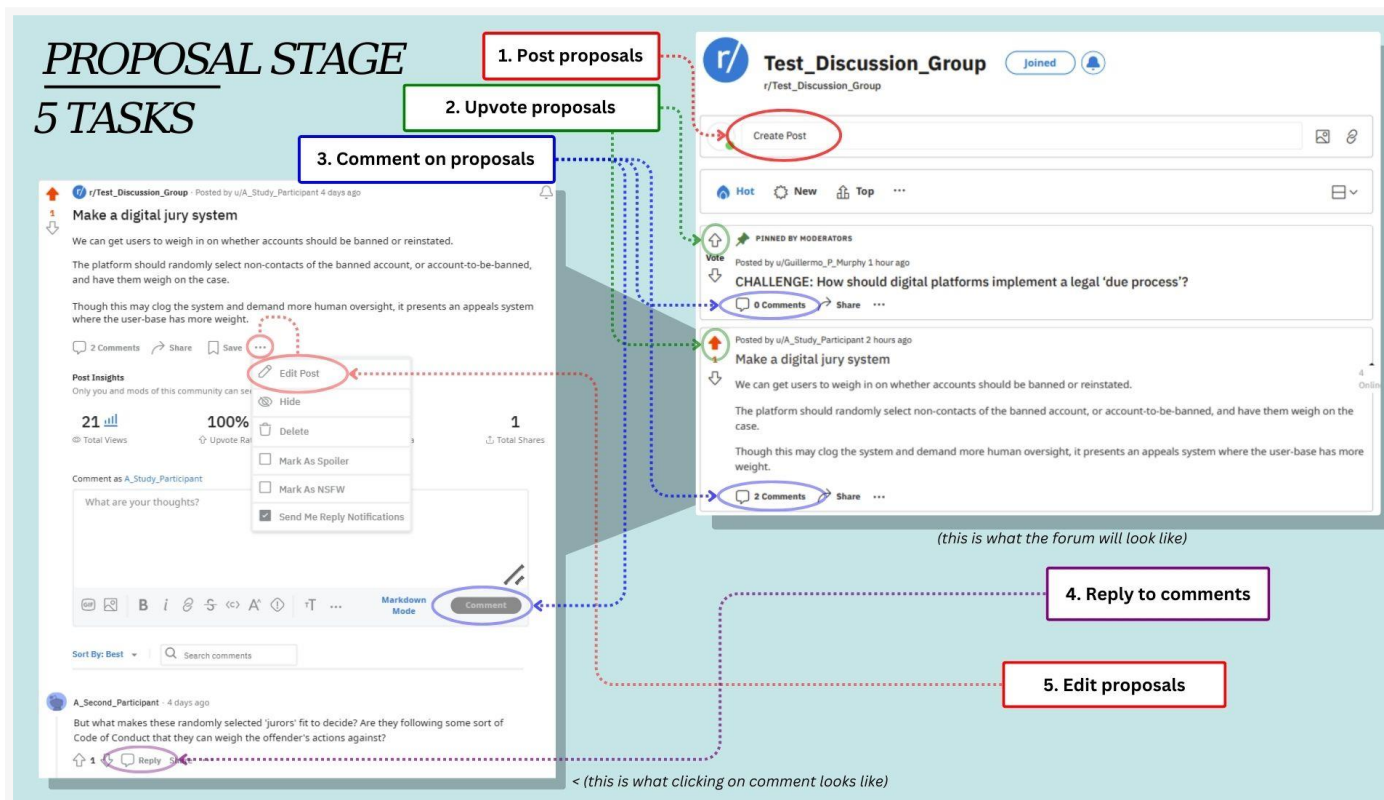
(you can find this image as an attached file if you wish to zoom in)

[end of Details]

Second Email

Subject: The Forum is Open!

Group B

-

Study Participation – The Forum is Open!

Dear […],

The Discussion Exercise for 'Digital Forums for Policy Making' has begun!

This is the link to the Forum: https://www.reddit.com/r/Forum_Discussion_B/

These are your account details:

> Username: […]

> Password: […]

To enter the forum, follow the link above, click 'Sign up' and then 'LOG IN' as shown in the image below, and enter your account details.
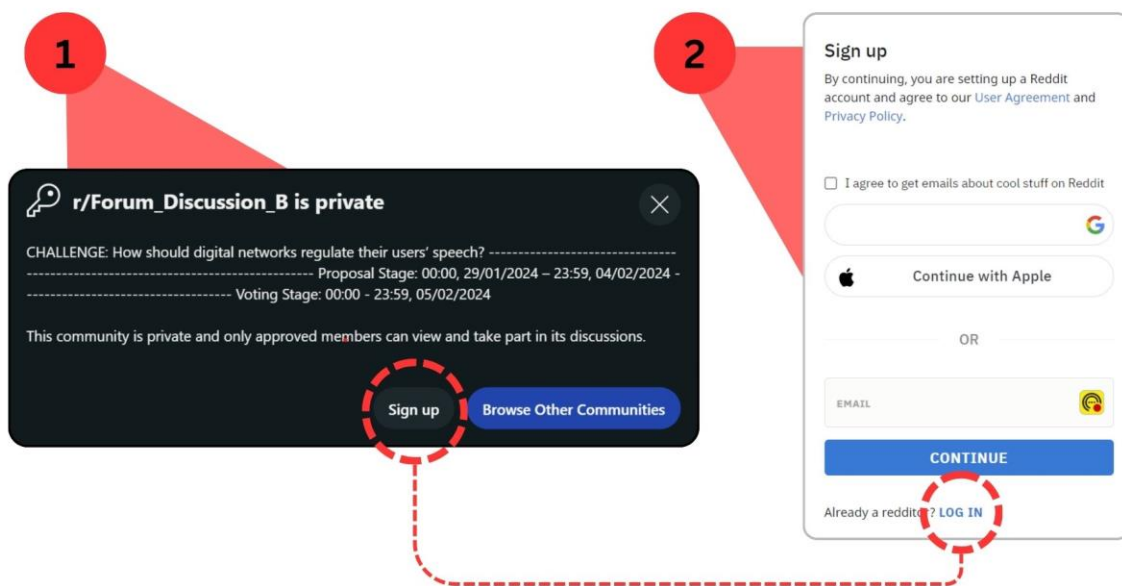
Once logged in you will be redirected to the Reddit Home Page (reddit.com). You can find your way to the forum from there, but it is easier to click on the Forum link again (https://www.reddit.com/r/Forum_Discussion_B/).

Your task for the Discussion Exercise is to propose and discuss policy on the forum addressing the 'Challenge'. The three most upvoted proposals by the end of the Proposal Stage will be voted on during the Voting Stage.

The Proposal Stage will end in 7 days, at 23:59 on the 04/02/2024 GMT/UTC.
The Voting Stage will then begin, lasting 24 hours.

Thank you for participating, and good luck!

Guillermo Pablos Murphy

Third Email

Dear participant!

It is now the 3rd day of the Discussion Exercise of 'Digital Forums for Policy Making'.

This is a reminder to log into the forum and engage with your peers!

Here are **five** ways you can deepen your engagement with the process of finding solutions to the 'Challenge':
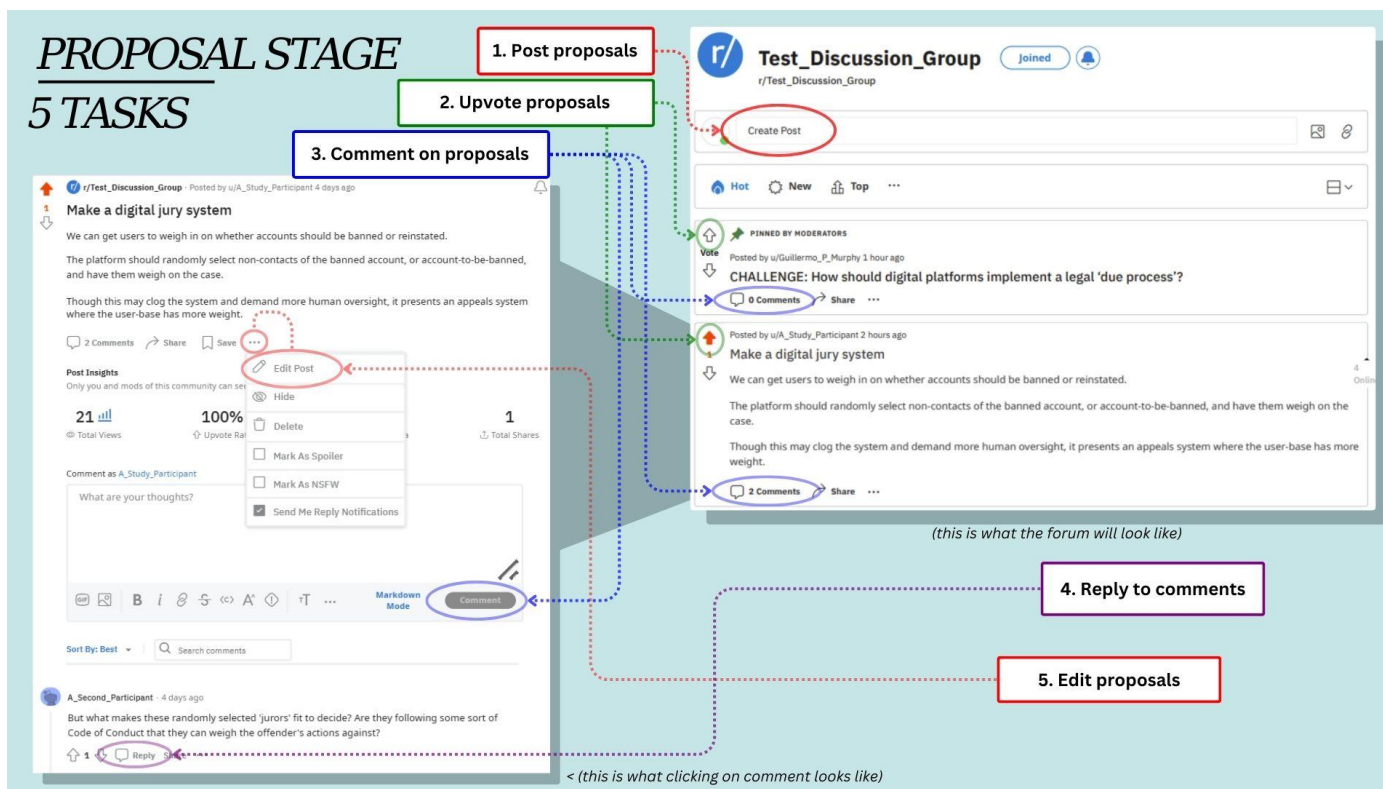
Remember, the three most upvoted Posts will be voted on next Monday.

Thank you for your participation and generosity in this study!

Yours sincerely,

Guillermo Pablos Murphy

Fourth Email

Dear participant,

This is the last day of the Proposal Stage of the Discussion Exercise.

At 00:00 GMT/UCT on the 05/02/2024, all Posts will be locked, preventing new comments from being posted.

Simultaneously, **a 24-hour poll** will be fixed to the top of the Forum – this is the **Voting Stage**, and last 24 hours of the Discussion Exercise. You will be asked to **choose one of the three most popular proposals** that have been posted and discussed throughout the Discussion Stage.

Popularity is determined by the number of Upvotes a Post has garnered.

During these last 24 hours, you may still post new proposals and discuss existing ones, but it is **your chance to mark those proposals you most consider viable solutions with your Upvote**.

To Upvote, just click the upward-facing arrow on a Post, as shown below:
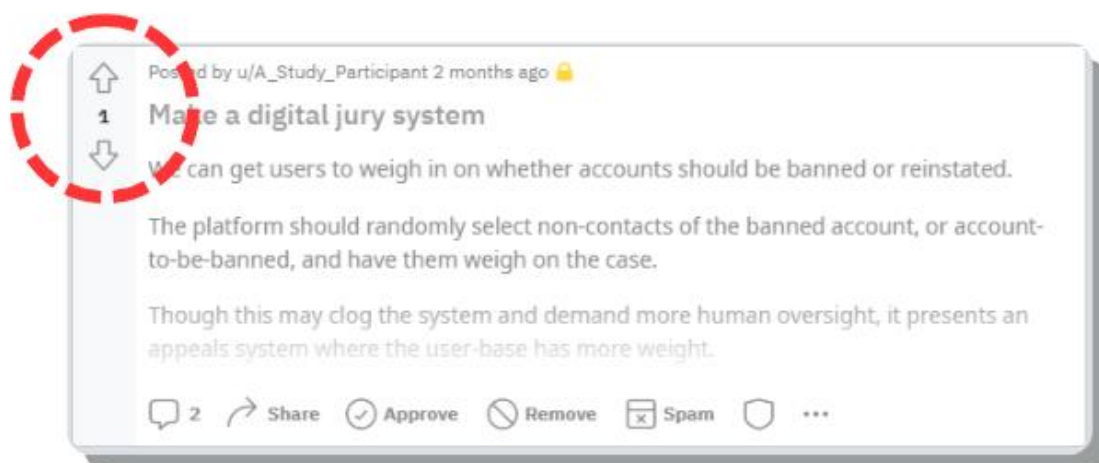
The number below represents the total number of Upvotes a Post has received.

You will receive an email reminder once the Poll opens.

You will receive the *final* email as it relates to participation in the Discussion Exercise with the outcome of the Vote, and a link to a questionnaire so you may provide your feedback.

Thank you for your participation and efforts in this study, you have made it possible.

Yours sincerely,

Guillermo Pablos Murphy

Fifth Email

Dear participant,

The Voting Stage has begun!

After 7 days of discussing and proposing solutions to the 'Challenge', it is time to come to a resolution.

A 24-hour poll is now fixed to the top of the subreddit. It has three choices, the three most popular proposals from the Proposal Stage.

Here is a link to the forum: https://www.reddit.com/r/Forum_Discussion_B/

You have 24 hours to vote. The poll will close at 00:00 GMT/UCT on 06/05/2024. At that point, the Discussion Exercise will have finished, and you will no longer have to engage with the forum.

You will receive an email with the vote results, and a link to a Feedback Questionnaire.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
Guillermo Pablos Murphy

Sixth Email

Dear participant,

The Final Poll of the Discussion Exercise has closed!

The final result is as so:

Proposal A:
Proposal B:
Proposal C:

Your forum has come to a decision!

Faced with the 'Challenge' of […], your imaginary organisation would pursue a policy of […].

Now, all that remains is to complete this 10-minute Feedback Questionnaire ().

Thank you for participating in this study. It has required a higher level of engagement than would usually be asked of a participants in any other study, but thanks to you, I been able to prototype what the future of democratic procedures could look like.

Yours sincerely,
Guillermo Pablos Murphy

7.4 Appendix IV: Screenshots of For a on 'reddit.com'

Discussion_Forum_B – (Note: Group A in the study)

B r/Forum_Discussion_B   Search in r/For...   2

r/Forum_Discussion_B
18 members   5 online

+ Create a post   🔔   Mod Tools   •••

Feed   **About**   Hot ⌄   ⊟ ⌄

u/Guillermo_P_Murphy • 2 mo. ago   📌 •••

FINAL POLL - Vote!

⬆ 1 ⬇   1   Share

u/Merlin_Evans • 3 mo. ago   •••

Proposal: Paid Moderation

Right now, many moderators are unpaid. Examples: Reddit, Wikipedia. They get paid in status and powertripping and gatekeeping rights. They therefore tend to have a predictable, and unpleasant, political stance - one that involves a lot of plausibly deniable passive aggression. This means that they regulate certain...

⬆ 4 ⬇   0   Share

u/Merlin_Evans • 3 mo. ago   •••

Proposal: Choose a different political powerbase

Challenge: How should digital networks regulate their users' speech ? Response: There is no objective way to police speech. Policing is an action. Actions can only be evaluated in relation to a goal. The situation: You are at point A. You want to move to Point B. Does action C move you closer to point B ? Admittedly this is sometime...

⬆ 1 ⬇   0   Share

u/Rex_Powell • 3 mo. ago   •••

Proposal: a scheme for digital "forgiveness"

Thinking in response to another post, the idea of persistent digital identity and associated reputation in the form of user ratings is essential. Every agent needs a way to qualitatively navigate through a network to find good matches to interact with. Reputation gives them a way to do this. On the other hand, a rating, once give...

⬆ 4 ⬇   2   Share

u/Sal_Schmidt • 3 mo. ago   •••

POWER TO THE USERS

2

⬆ 2 ⬇   1   Share

u/Micah_Odonnell • 3 mo. ago

Proposal: Digital networks should focus on education/awareness of hate speech rather than absolute regulation.

Popular social media platforms contain such a vast amount of user-generated content that individually or manually reviewing and regulating posts, comments, etc is incredibly ineffective, if not impossible. The clear alternative to this would be to use automated filters (such as a form of AI) to recognize and moderate potenti...

⬆ 2 ⬇   1   Share

u/Lamar_Hancock • 3 mo. ago

We cannot regulate anonymous speech. Deanonymise digital speech.

Although the controller of this exercise would be able to view who I am. On "greater" Reddit and other sites I could quite literally say anything I wanted with confidence if I made an anonymous account. I could defame, abuse, and discriminate without consequence. Perhaps the only way we can regulate speech is by allowing...

⬆ 3 ⬇   5   Share

u/Arturo_Floyd • 3 mo. ago

Proposal regarding digital networks speech regulation. Hate speech detection

As this project can help a lot by giving voice to people and ideas we can't forget about moderating and limiting hazardous material, in this case i am referring to hate speech which isn't desirable in any network. To cope with this we can assume that a huge amount of messages can't be analyzed manually and so we need...

⬆ 6 ⬇   3   Share

u/Linda_Johns • 3 mo. ago

How should digital networks regulate their users' speech? BE MORE HONEST ABOUT IMPACT

WARNING: Mentions sensitive and potentially upsetting topics How should digital networks regulate their users' speech? WHAT THEY SHOULD DO: I think it depends on the type of digital platform and also on a case by case basis. The first axiom that came into my head was "the digital networks should regulate speech so tha...

⬆ 5 ⬇   4   Share

u/Berry_Simpson • 3 mo. ago

What-How-Why of a User Contribution Policy

Here are some considerations on creating a productive collective atmosphere for user discussions: What: Objectives:

   1. Encourage participation and discussion, without aggression, on topics that affect the group as a whole....

⬆ 2 ⬇   0   Share

Page | 96

Forum_Discussion_C (Note: Group B in the study)

r/Forum_Discussion_C
21 members   2 online

+ Create a post   🔔   Mod Tools   •••

Feed   **About**   Hot ⌄   ⊟ ⌄

🧑 **u/Guillermo_P_Murphy** • 2 mo. ago   📌 •••

FINAL POLL - Vote!

⬆ 2 ⬇   0   Share

🟢 **u/Damon_Gregory** • 2 mo. ago   •••

Electronical voting

Technology could help tackling low voter turnout, especially among younger groups. A digital process would allow to vote independently of location and opening hours. I see it as a way to make voting more innovative a d in that way more interesting. For example Switzerland is working on such a system for several years...

⬆ 3 ⬇   0   Share

🧑 **u/Neriman_Thornton** • 2 mo. ago   •••

Encourage a sense of belonging

Increased Benefits The problem is that young people don't care about politics because they don't feel involved. To a certain degree, they even feel abandoned. If they were given more benefits such as housing assistance, free public transportation, study grants, things that benefit them so that they feel heard and cared for; they...

⬆ 3 ⬇   1   Share

🧑 **u/Ernestine_Robbins** • 3 mo. ago   •••

Don't Hide Children Away from the Political Process

Bringing children up in an environment where involvement in civil society and the wider community is a feature of life, I believe would foster an attitude where the value of political participation is understood. Seeing politics in action, and seeing that in fact, changes can come from grassroots movements, would take politics away fro...

⬆ 4 ⬇   0   Share

🟢 **u/Jerold_Mcconnell** • 3 mo. ago   •••

More representation

u/Arnulfo_Anthony • 3 mo. ago

Compulsory Voting

Whilst I agree that greater representation of younger people in politics is vital, I would also propose a system of compulsory voting. This ensures that all young people have a legal obligation to vote. In Australia, the system has compulsory voting and in their most recent Federal Election in May 2022, the turnout was just...

⬆ 3 ⬇   2   Share

u/Mindy_Wells • 3 mo. ago

It starts in the family...

1. To encourage parents to foster in their children an attitude of thankfulness from the outset. This attitude could lend itself to growing a sense of personal responsibility towards their family and their wider community which in turn could lead to active participation in local political engagement....

⬆ 1 ⬇   1   Share

u/Teresa_Mcgrath • 3 mo. ago

Education in Schools before voting age

I feel that tackling voter turnout should start before young people reach voting age. Receiving some sort of fun and informative political education in school and then staging 'elections' during key political votes is a good way for children to understand the process of elections. I personally never studied any politics at school, but ...

⬆ 9 ⬇   3   Share

u/Guillermo_P_Murphy MOD • 3 mo. ago 🔒

CHALLENGE: How should democracies tackle low voter turnout among young people?

How should democracies tackle low voter turnout among young people? Task You have 7 days (00:00, 29/01/2024 – 23:59, 04/02/2024) to propose policies that could be implemented to address the 'Challenge'. Use the forum to post proposals and engage with others' posts. The 3 posts with most Upvotes at 23:59,...

1   2   Share